

COMMONWEAL

**'THE GOOD SOCIETY'
SHAPING THE INSTITUTIONS
THAT SHAPE US**

Robert Bellah
Richard Madsen
William Sullivan
Ann Swidler
Steven Tipton

**ENABLED FOR
THE KINGDOM
A REFLECTION
ON CELIBACY**

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THE CHILDREN OF
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**A MARRIED
PRIEST
WHAT CHANGED,
WHAT REMAINED**

THOMAS A. MCCABE

**THE
CONVENT AT
AUSCHWITZ**

MARK O'CONNOR

**THE
POLITICS
OF MOWING**



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CORRESPONDENCE

Pressure points

Philadelphia, Pa.

To the Editors: "No lasting peace in the Middle East is possible without a resolution of the Palestinian issue," according to John Langan ["An Imperfectly Just War," June 1], who stresses the need for a "process requiring the Israelis to deal with the Palestinians."

This familiar refrain unfairly places the blame on Israel for the absence of peace in the Middle East. Why not require the Palestinians to deal with the Israelis? After all, the absence of peace in the Holy Land has its origins in the longstanding refusal of the Palestinian Arabs and the various Arab regimes to accept the legitimacy of Israel's existence. To this day, the official covenant of the Palestine Liberation Organization calls for the destruction of the Jewish state. The abandonment of that reprehensible aim would be an appropriate first step in the process of compelling Palestinian Arabs to "deal" with Israel in a peaceful manner.

GARY WOLF

The writer is executive director of CAM-ERA, the Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America.

The author replies:

Contrary to what Gary Wolf suggests, I do not wish to blame Israel for the absence of peace in the Middle East. Anyone who looks at the history of the region in this century and the variety of disputes within it can see that treating Israel as the prime source of conflict in the region is both unfair and unrealistic. I believe that it is both morally right and politically necessary for the Palestinians to deal with the Israelis as well as for the Israelis to deal with the Palestinians. I also believe that because of the cohesion they have as a nation-state, because of the resolution that the United States has shown in the defense of its allies, and because of the military superiority they enjoy in the region, the Israelis have both greater responsibilities and greater opportunities in opening the way for peace.

Clearly, though, peace will not occur unless Arab leadership emerges which will respect the legitimacy and the security of Israel.

JOHN LANGAN, S.J.

Ho-hum editorial

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: I was pleased to see that by the end of your ho-hum-so-what-else-is-new editorial review of the new encyclical ["After Communism," June 1] you were able to work yourself up to the conclusion, "*Centesimus annus* is provocative." I admit to being considerably more enthusiastic about the pope's argument, although I am puzzled by your statement that I wrote about it from "the Gradgrind side of the political spectrum." I've been accused of all sorts of things over the years, but Gradgrindism?

Permit me to urge you to read the encyclical again. I think you may come to recognize that the pope hardly ignores all the frettings and qualifications to which your editorial is devoted. The concerns you raise about poverty and so much else are not to be balanced against the pope's endorsement of democratic capitalism or, as he more frequently describes it, "the free economy." His point is that, to the extent that human problems are economic, the challenge is to include everyone within the free economy's "circle" of productivity and exchange. It is a formidable challenge indeed. As I wrote in the *Wall Street Journal* essay to which you took such exception, "Far from being an uncritical blessing of the market economy, then, the message of *Centesimus annus* is that the work of the 'new capitalism' has hardly begun."

I can understand your fond attachment to what you call "liberalism or even democratic socialism," but I do hope *Commonweal* will open itself to considering the pope's contention that the really big human problems require cultural, moral, and spiritual answers. I appreciate that you find the encyclical disorienting, but your editorial need not have been so

very defensive. Once you grasp the point that democratic capitalism is the economic corollary of the Christian understanding of human nature and destiny, and the further point that economics is a limited dimension of the social order, you will then discover that *Centesimus annus* gives you ample support for inveighing against this society's cultural and moral derelictions as fervently as is your wont.

I suspect that you will find that, if you really try, it is not so hard to give up nostalgia for democratic socialism. While I think the encyclical deserves much better than your tepid, and condescending, commendation for being "provocative," I would settle for some editorial evidence that it has in fact provoked you to entertain second thoughts about the superannuated anticapitalism that animates your evaluation of *Centesimus annus*. Do read it again. Surely the pope deserves at least that much, if only for old times' sake, from a magazine that used to bill itself as Catholic.

RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS

The editors reply:

When Richard Neuhaus operates in his polemical mode, his conclusions often soar above his evidence. In this instance some of the evidence is readily available to
(Continued on page 444)

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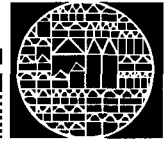
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COMMONWEAL



Everybody loves a parade

New York City's June 10 "Welcome Home" parade for the troops of Operation Desert Storm passed clamorously along Broadway two blocks from this office, and two blocks was about as close as any of us could get to seeing the actual guests of honor. New York City police estimated the crowd—watching, or futilely craning for a glimpse of the heroes—at a staggering 4.7 million. Initial reports put the amount of paper shavings showered on the 12,000 marchers at 1,200 tons. This patriotic arithmetic was later revised to a mere 87 tons. But whatever its vital statistics, what New York City Mayor David Dinkins called the "Mother of All Parades" certainly lived up to its billing theatrically. It was a display of chauvinistic ardor that, at least for the course of a day, had the aura of a volcanic eruption.

A slight drizzle of paper started floating down into the narrow alley we look out on shortly after the start of the parade around noon. The shower of red, blue, green, and yellow Necco-wafer-size confetti, as well as wide swatches of white computer paper, built steadily for well over an hour. Heading downstairs and up Fulton Street, we soon encountered the human "gridlock" that embraced the parade on either side of Broadway. Along the impassable sidewalks, vendors were eagerly hawking all the paraphernalia of proper political sentiment, from American flags and tiny flag decals, to Tee-shirts commemorating the war or reviling the Iraqis. All around us people were gazing or pointing up to the ceaseless hail of confetti. Ahead, at the intersection of Fulton and Broadway, spumes of shimmering paper danced above the marchers in an almost liquid swirl of color. Broadway's so-called "Canyon of Heroes," otherwise the most staid and circumspect of avenues, seemed to reel like some bedecked and benighted New Year's Eve reveler. Whatever one thought of American actions in the Gulf, only the most dour of dissidents could suppress a smile at seeing the city that the country most loves to hate turned for some hours into the nation's jubilant jester. In its childlike frivolity, this extravagant and playful display of color and emotion was irresistible.

Still, like President George Bush's claims about a "new world order," a degree of hyperbole inevitably shadowed the festivities. The nation's near obsession with celebrating a swift and deceptively "clean" victory over Iraq seems hurried and anxious. Something in our attitude borders on moral exhibitionism; our compulsive self-gratulation seems out of proportion to the military and political goals attained or, in retrospect, the risks taken. Even many sympathetic to the use of force in the Gulf hesitate before the headlong rush to solemnize this war.

These reservations are not meant to begrudge the joy of those who exalt in American forthrightness or the safe return of American soldiers. Perhaps the nation's ebullient reaction is only simple relief. The United States is a big and powerful nation, and its public ceremonies are rarely understated. Nor are military successes likely to

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be the object of sorrowful hand-wringing. Still, it is hard to abide President Bush's claim that the Gulf War exorcised the so-called "Vietnam syndrome," or that American troops went abroad to repel aggression and returned home to find a "nation transformed." We do not doubt that aggression was repelled in Kuwait. But the suggestion that our common life here has been altered in any significant way, let alone transformed, is an all-too-familiar and, alas, wearying falsehood.

The cynical politics George Bush practiced so expertly in 1988 will surely make good use of this now famous "victory." Who doubts that the "Mother of All Parades" will become—in sharp 30-second sound bites—the mother of all presidential reelection commercials come 1992? That's politics, say a good many people. To the victor belong the rights to spoilage. But such crudely partisan uses of the war are in the truest sense unpatriotic. As Meg Greenfield has written (*Newsweek*, March 18, 1991), the congressional debate on the Gulf War was a "rare and admirable exercise in political accountability....the Washington bunch did the right thing; and the reward that half of them [those who voted against the war] get is public mortification and rebuke." That must not be the case.

As the Independence Day celebrations recently completed reminded us, a love of country is the privilege of every American, whether he or she supported the Bush administration's policy in this war or not. The emblems of patriotism, the conviviality of community ritual, even the bright, childish excitement of balloons, melting ice cream, and marching bands are good for the soul. They speak to a common life using symbols that afford all of us a social intimacy largely absent in a proudly competitive and individualistic culture. In doing so, they evoke the legitimate authority of a community to articulate its values and celebrate its life. We desperately need just this symbolic vocabulary if we hope to really transform American life. For we cannot solve our most pressing social problems using the language of individual rights and self-interest (see Robert Bellah et al., "The Good Society," p. 425). In a very real sense, we need balloons and confetti. Americans must once again be able to meet along that figurative parade route, and from such celebrations bring back to everyday concerns the avowedly communitarian enthusiasms our all-too-small-minded politics now lacks.

So, while we think parades are on the whole a good thing—and balloons and confetti absolute musts—our sense of elation is

haunted by the profane purposes to which the rituals of public life are routinely put. In the interminable rain of confetti from the miraculously blue June sky, we sensed goodness and the warm bonds of a common life affirmed. In the partisan tidying up ahead we fear a calculated exploitation, if not betrayal.

ET CETERA

SO CUT IT OUT! Awards in the annual Catholic Press Association competition (see back page) are usually accompanied by judges' citations. This year, explaining one of their rankings of scholarly Catholic magazines, their worships opined as follows: "Social Thought wins third place. The more limited audience for this publication is still no excuse for its insightful comments."

REPORT FROM THE BACK YARD

THE POLITICS OF MOWING

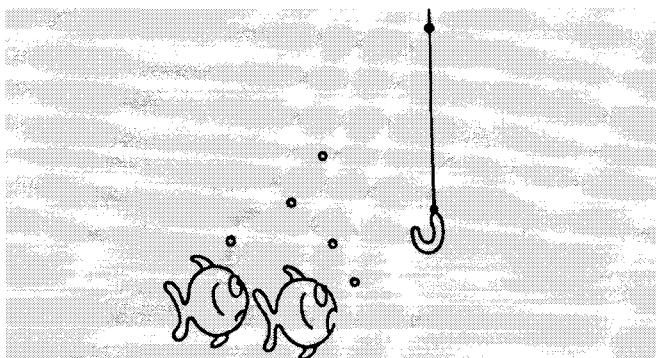
GENTLEMEN, SLOW YOUR ENGINES

Mowing the lawn has always given me a private pleasure. There is the smell of gasoline and the roar of the mower, yet there is also the smell of the cut grass and the sun beating down. The clean, even rows give the illusion of order and accomplishment. There is pattern and regularity, and the feel of the earth beneath my feet—the sense of covering ground, my own ground. Or maybe it's harvest. Mowing is the closest I come to working the land and bringing in a crop, even though I mow without bagging, leaving the clippings to return their nitrogen.

The roaring of the engine is an element in the pleasure, silencing everything else. It is a shell of sound keeping out external influence. It's meditative. Going up and down the rows, laying down the pattern, I move into a lawn-mowing trance, my brain waves lengthening.

"The fact is the sweetest dream labor knows," Frost says in "Mowing," a poem about (among other things) the scything of a meadow. For Frost it's the whisper of the scythe that brings this knowledge, not the droning of a four-cycle engine, but I think I know what he means. Working in a field or a yard, repeating the same motions over and over, our thoughts subside and the plain fact of things emerges. The ground is hard. The trees and flowers have a presence, a density.

Mowing is masculine. Mowing is mechanical. Running the mower is the first mechanical skill I learned—put your foot on the rim here, my dad taught me, adjust the choke so—and I remember feeling accomplished and grown-up as I practiced in our backyard, overlapping the wheels just slightly at each new row, smiling with authority.



"The trick is to swallow the worm without swallowing the whole hook, line, and sinker."

Mowing is the first way I earned money, too, first at Mrs. Gray's house next door, then across the street at Mr. Crook's and Mr. McMullen's. I charged \$2 per lawn the first summer and kept a little ledger to record my earnings. The next year dad co-signed a loan so I could buy a new red Toro and go into business in a bigger way. My brother and I were "Anderson Brothers Enterprises Ltd." We put up a sign on the maple tree in the front yard and ran an ad in the *Northtown Shopper*. I was driving by then, an old '49 Chevrolet panel truck, and we'd do hauling and general odd jobs, too. There was nothing better than lifting the mower into the truck on those sweet summer mornings and bombing off to the next job.

But now comes *Fifty Simple Things You Can Do to Save the Environment* and a set of different facts. An acre of lawn needs more than twenty-seven thousand gallons of water each week. Americans routinely overwater by 20 to 40 percent. Lawn care increases water use by as much as 30 percent in the summers. Homeowners use up to ten times more toxic chemicals per acre than farmers, up to five to ten pounds per lawn—a national total of 25 to 50 million pounds.

And there's no mention here of the amount of gas consumed by lawnmowers across the country, and the pollution that causes. Several friends have decided not to mow their lawns at all this summer. The grass dries up anyway in July and August, they argue, so why bother? Greenness and smoothness are bourgeois affectations.

Mowing the lawn again the other day I was thinking that the nineties are complicating all our usual losses of innocence. It's not just children growing up and discovering their realities are appearances. Grown-ups keep having their rugs pulled out from under them. Taking showers, flushing the toilet, using deodorant, driving to work, eating a hamburger, making a fire in the fireplace—in a time of global warming, oil wars, waste disposal problems, and diminishing resources, everything we do has implications. Caught up in the grand ecology, no single action can be innocent, unreflective.

"There is something about the human mind that keeps it well within the confines of the parish," E.B. White says. Our habit is to think in "small, conventional terms." But as the world gets smaller and the atmosphere more fragile, the differences between the parochial and nonparochial also shrink. Everything is parochial in the sense that everything concerns us, affects us, just as we affect everything else.

Frost uses the scything of the meadow as a metaphor of death and mortality, echoing Andrew Marvell and the great scythe of time hurrying near. We have always thought metaphorically, always realized that our private lives are implicated in something larger. But now that habit of metaphorical thinking needs to be literalized. The mowing of our own particular meadows or lawns not only figures the destruction of the rain forest in Brazil but also has a real effect itself, a literal effect, however small. Blake urged us to see the whole world in a grain of sand. In the delicate balance we find ourselves in, grains of sand might make all the difference.

But that ecology can work the other way, giving hope. Interconnectedness means that we have some power. It means

In keeping with *Commonweal's* usual summer schedule, only one issue is published each month during July and August. The next issue will be dated August 9.

that deciding whether or not to mow the lawn and how often is a political act, which is the point of all the recommendations in *Fifty Simple Things*. If all of us composted grass clippings, we could cut landfill congestion by 18 percent. If one hundred thousand of us avoided overwatering in the summer, 5 million gallons of water would be saved. If even 10 percent of us began using organic pesticides, there would be 2.5 to 5 million fewer pounds of toxic chemicals in the environment every year.

In "The Reactor and the Garden," Wendell Berry reflects on what has the most political force, getting arrested at a nuclear power plant or going home and planting a garden. Both are necessary, he thinks, but it's the garden that might make the most difference. If everyone planted a garden the world would be a different place, not only because of the direct environmental impact—the impact on food distribution, the release of all that extra oxygen into the atmosphere—but because of the calming, centering effect of working in the soil. "Gardening is the finest sort of challenge to intelligence," Berry says, "correcting the cheap energy mind." There's a payoff for our personal ecologies, in other words: the smooth functioning of our own individual systems.

I'm starting my first garden now. I put out the peppers too early, but the bush beans and rhubarb are doing fine, and wild asparagus keeps coming up at odd places among the rows. The struggle is with the poison oak snaking through the fence, and with thousands of little sow bugs ravaging the slight cucumber v's. Pesticide or no?

Berry's point is that personal health depends on social and environmental health. And vice versa: we can take care of pollution only when we begin taking care of our inner pollutions.

This idea of connection and synergy helps put a book like *Habits of the Heart* in perspective, too. Robert Bellah and the other sociologists argue there that American culture is dominated by individualism, that our vocabulary for describing commitments to anything larger than ourselves has atrophied. Our values are largely private. "We are concerned that this individualism has become cancerous," they say, "that it may be destroying those social integuments moderating its destructive tendencies."

I've been taking that statement personally. There's a forest behind our house where I go walking almost every day, breathing in the smell of the fir trees, losing myself. What I usually think about as I'm walking is not the spotted owl and the problems of the old-growth but the way the light hits the maple or the sound of the stream. I give to environmental action groups but I keep thinking that instead of spending my time walking in the forest I should be attending committee meetings. Maybe my preoccupations are too aesthetic and interior.

In any event, I am adjusting the level of my mower and I am starting to compost. I'm mowing and watering less. It's not easy. I'm the generation on the cusp, with all these private associations

and nostalgias to reverse, and a fatal love of greenness, of the broad green slope. Mowing still centers me. It's that contradictory love of the sound of the engine, so out of keeping with my usual aversion to noise and machinery. It's the smell of the gasoline as much as the smell of cut grass. It's the long hour of the soothing mechanical mindless motion and then coming in for coffee, my grass-stained shoes left on the porch. It's my dad telling me to put my foot on the rim and then yank up on the cord at a slight

angle. It's the illusion of pattern, the illusion of authority.

But in the ecology of whatever large systems are at work here, there will be some compensations, I expect. For whatever losses there will be gains—if nothing else an awareness of the web itself, an awareness of this unavoidable economy.

CHRIS ANDERSON

Chris Anderson is an associate professor of English at Oregon State University.

OF SEVERAL MINDS Abigail McCarthy

WANTED: SACRIFICIAL LAMB

FILLING THE DEMOCRATIC TICKET

If I can judge by an after-lunch-over-coffee conversation the other day, the failure of the Democrats to produce a presidential candidate is becoming something of an international scandal. The participants included several savvy diplomatic wives of varying backgrounds: one Frenchwoman, one Fijian married to a New Zealander, an Egyptian member of an international commission. Why, they demanded of the American women present, was no prominent Democrat running for president? Why, the implication was, were the Democrats abandoning the country to George Bush and the current Republican administration? They saw it as a moral lapse with possible worldwide repercussions.

How can we ask anyone to run, answered a Democratic congressional wife, when the conditions are so impossible? She spelled it out. A candidate would have to spend two years raising money and part of that time is gone. It takes \$10 million just to get through the Iowa primary. If he wins there, as Richard Gephardt did, and falters in New Hampshire—as Gephardt did—funds dry up. You can't keep going. In the meantime your family has led a fractured life and has been under almost unbearable strain.

But *someone* should run just to get a serious message to the voters about the problems facing your country, argued the foreigners. Again the congressional wife was skeptical. How does one get the message out, she countered, when it has to be tai-

lored to costly TV thirty-second spots, to slogans and sound bites retailed by a media with no interest in serious discussion of complex issues?

It is a grave dilemma. But perhaps the trap of eternal fund-raising and nondefinitive primaries can be avoided. All it would take would be a breakthrough by one candidate—a candidate who refused to accept the limitations of the present campaign givens.

Such a campaign was announced half-seriously recently by lawyer and former congressional aide Mark Bisnow (the inspiration for the early idealistic Michael Doonesbury in Garry Trudeau's cartoons). Admittedly his announcement was for a Senate race in California but the size of California and the millions spent in its Senate races make what he had to say relevant to a presidential candidacy.

He would run, he said, to change the present system: "Sure I wouldn't win. But it's worth a little personal humiliation to help get my message across to other candidates. If my platform provoked even a blip of public response, they might sit up and listen." And he would refuse to run in the way outlined as obligatory by the congressional wife cited above. He would limit campaign contributions to \$50 a person, do no TV advertising ("It's expensive, simplistic, and deceptive"), reject all endorsements, use no pollsters, media consultants, or speech-writers ("Politicians shouldn't lip-synch"). Once elected, he promises, among other things, to serve only

one term, limit his office staff to five—there now are senators who have personal staffs of one hundred—vote the national interest whatever the consequences for California, refuse speaking fees, free meals, golfing trips, or anything else of value from any private interest while in office.

In his announcements, Bisnow anticipated the findings of the recent Kettering study ("Citizens and Politics: A View from Main Street America") which found Americans angry about a political process they think is controlled by a professional political class and the media. At least half of the points he made zeroed in on the relationship of politicians to moneyed special-interest groups, a prime source of the public's disgust according to the foundation's report.

Essentially Bisnow is saying that he would like to alter the way the game is played. Bisnow's campaign proposals are not as far-fetched as they might seem. Lawton Chiles of Florida reached the Senate having refused any campaign contributions over \$100 a person. Jimmy Carter became a leading contender in the 1976 primaries by substituting intensive personal campaigning for a media campaign.

Right now Paul Tsongas, former senator from Massachusetts and the one announced Democratic candidate, is launched on a campaign which seems as quixotic as that proposed by Bisnow. (The ladies at lunch, for example, waved him aside when his name was brought into their conversation.) Few may be listening right now, but Tsongas is doggedly taking every opportunity to reach the voters with a new plan for Democrats outlined in a position paper entitled "A Call to Economic Arms." Who knows? As he goes from living-room fund raisers to small city Rotary meetings the effect may be incremental.

Tsongas, too, would like to alter the way the game is played. "The mission of the

Democratic party in 1992 would normally be to put one of its own in the White House," he says, "but these are not normal times....Let us use 1992 to articulate the cold challenges and the real threats to America....Let us rally our nation to... address these issues....Let us create a mandate, a mandate that will allow purposeful and effective governance." This is the mandate he envisions: "It requires the reemergence of America as the world's preeminent economic power. It calls upon America to lead the fight for world environmental equilibrium. It demands that, once and for all, we achieve energy sufficiency. It seeks the repairing of the American social fabric so that we are spiritually one community. It positions America as the critical partner in achieving world peace, but based upon the principles of true burden sharing."

In pursuit of that mandate, Tsongas is willing to be, as he now appears to be, a

sacrificial candidate. (Only human, however, he reminds us that he was discounted at the beginning of other campaigns, campaigns that he won. There is always a chance.) Interestingly enough, Mario Cuomo, who does not seem to be of a mind to be a sacrificial candidate, includes Tsongas on his list of those who have the physical presence and the intelligence to be an attractive candidate. Like Tsongas but more mundanely partisan, he believes that "the Democrats need ideas that are not Republican ideas." He plans to make speeches around the country later this year to shape a Democratic agenda. His emphasis is on strengthening America at home—on domestic programs. His efforts, like those of Tsongas, will be a service. The creation of a mandate or program is vital for the Democrats.

Whatever the program or mandate, however, the reality is stark. The candidate, whoever he is, must hit the ground running

in a series of primaries beginning only months from now. He must be invulnerable to a Willie-Hortonesque attack already shaping up in White House-Congress encounters. These two things make the candidacy of another lesser-known candidate, Jay Rockefeller, an appealing prospect. As columnist Mary McGrory puts it, he strikes many Democrats as the perfect sacrificial lamb for '92. His interest in the presidency is fueled by his disgust at the lack of leadership shown by Bush on the domestic front. Rockefeller's intense feelings about the neglect of America's children, about health care, and other issues stems, he says, from his experience as a VISTA volunteer in the state he now represents—West Virginia. Paul Tsongas's views were shaped by his experience in the Peace Corps. If Rockefeller would dare the race, as Tsongas has done, might Democrats not have the perfect sacrificial ticket—Rockefeller-Tsongas or Tsongas-Rockefeller? **LI**

OF SEVERAL MINDS David R. Carlin, Jr.

SEIZING THE HIGH GROUND

QUOTAS, BUSH & THE DEMOCRATS

Time was when American liberalism—a tradition that goes back at least to Thomas Jefferson, if not to Roger Williams—stood unambiguously for universalistic values. That is, it insisted that persons possessed their fundamental rights by virtue of being human, not by virtue of membership in some particular group or category. Thus it was wrong to discriminate for or against someone on the basis of religion, race, ethnicity, or sex.

This liberal idea, that "all men are created equal," has an ancient pedigree. It was the faith of the Enlightenment, but its ultimate source was the humanism of classical antiquity, especially as formulated in Stoicism. For the Stoic, universalistic loyalties took precedence over particularistic loyalties; the single city of God transcended the many cities of men. In the words of

Marcus Aurelius, addressing himself: "The poet says, Dear city of Cecrops; and wilt thou not say, Dear city of Zeus?"

For the longest time American conservatives were only half-hearted in their acceptance of universal values; they found it hard to renounce particularism; they dug in their heels, they dragged their feet. But they were fighting a losing cause; for the world decided, in one case after another, that differential treatment on the basis of race, religion, sex, and other non-merit criteria was wrong—and inefficient.

But hold the phone!

In the battle over the 1991 Civil Rights Act, George Bush is attempting to turn the tables on the liberals by calling the Democratic version that passed the U.S. House a "quota bill." By so doing, he is trying to seize the universalistic high ground, at the same time portraying his opponents, the liberals, as particularists.

As the president tells the story, he is on the side of Martin Luther King, Jr., Thomas Jefferson, Marcus Aurelius, and various other angels who believe that all humans are created equal and that it is therefore wrong to discriminate on the basis of race, sex, etc.; while the liberals, betraying their tradition, have transformed themselves into particularists, favoring special treatment for special groups.

Of course the liberals in Congress cry "foul" at this; they say Bush is playing demagogue. Many even go so far as to accuse him of stooping to a level no prominent national figure has descended to since the heyday of George Wallace: the level at which one stirs up racial animosity for the sake of political gain.

These liberals deny they have turned their backs on universalistic values. They say their affirmative action proposal is not a plan for quotas; nor is it a scheme for granting "group rights." It is merely a procedural device, a legalistic tool, for protecting individual rights. It is a way of removing a very heavy burden of proof from the individual who might suffer discrimination, instead placing a relatively light burden of proof on the employer who might discriminate. "So what's the big deal?" ask the liberals. "Why does the pres-

ident pretend not to understand?"

Part of the answer, of course, is that many companies and government agencies subject to affirmative-action law have in fact tended to adopt something close to a quota system. While not a very imaginative way of handling personnel issues, it is the surest way to keep the federal watchdog from nipping at your heels.

But there is more to the story than this. Contemporary liberalism is passing through something of an identity crisis. While most liberals have remained more or less faithful

to their tradition's universalistic principles, a substantial minority have become what may be called neo-particularists.

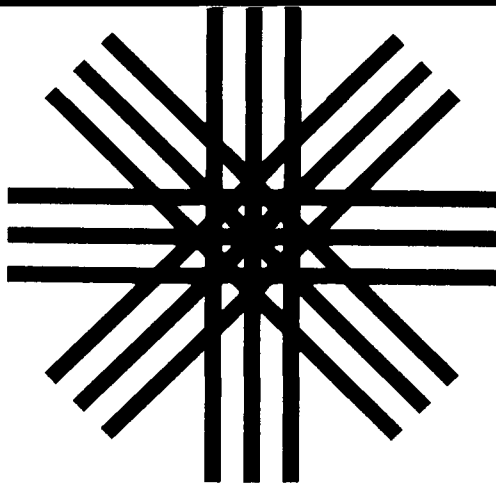
This new-fangled particularism manifests itself in a number of ways. Sometimes (taking the cue from Carol Gilligan's book of the early 1980s, *In a Different Voice*) the message is that women and men are fundamentally different in the way their minds work. Once upon a time this was a silly conservative cliché ("Men are rational, women intuitive"), which eventually got laughed out of court. But now it is back

in liberal dress/trousers; it talks with a straight face; and we are no longer allowed to laugh. When one asks what the difference is between the new intuitionism and the old, one is told that the old was a gimmick for keeping women in an inferior social and domestic position, while the new is quite different: it is a way of elevating women to a position of equality. Got it? Yeah, right.

At the moment the noisiest neo-particularists are not found in the feminist section of the movement but in the "multiculturalist" wing. Inscripting "cultural diversity" on their banner, they insist that all cultures are basically equal and therefore entitled to equal recognition and protection. They reject the notion that there is a hierarchy of cultures, that some are closer to heaven than others. Above all they reject, decidedly and vehemently, the idea that there is some supreme culture at the top of a pyramid, an ultimate humanism. The illusion that such a culture exists, presiding over all lesser cultures the way Zeus presided over the lesser gods on Olympus, is due, they tell us, to the prejudice of Eurocentrism, a white man's bias that justifies Western political hegemony in a world that is largely nonwhite.

From the point of view of George Bush and his conservative friends in the Republican party, this liberal neo-particularism is a fine thing; it plays into their hands and it justifies their raising the alarm about quotas. If liberalism were faithful to its universalistic tradition, the public would react to the president's cry of alarm, saying "Quotas? Don't be silly, George. Everyone knows that liberals, whatever their faults, are the last people in the world to tolerate quotas. So no matter what affirmative action may be, it can't possibly be quotas." Instead the reaction is, "Quotas? Hmmm, maybe the president has a point."

Funny the way things turn out. It took liberalism approximately two centuries to convert America fully to universalistic values, to lead us out of the land of particularistic bondage. And now that the great victory is won, how do liberals celebrate? Some of them celebrate by returning to the fleshpots of Egypt. And the rest of them, even the sober and chaste, are tainted by such unseemly conduct on the part of their comrades.



THE GRAYMOOR PRIZE

The Friars of the Atonement announce the second annual Graymoor Prize, to be awarded to the best essay on any aspect of ecumenical or interreligious affairs. The prize is intended to encourage and support new ecumenical and interreligious ideas and perspectives. The award-winning submission, which may take the form of a scholarly or critical essay or a personal narrative, should appeal to the interests of the general educated reader.

Original and unpublished essays of approximately 2500-4000 words should be submitted to the editors of *COMMONWEAL* who will make the final decision following consultation with a panel of experts. The winning essay will receive a prize of \$1,000 and will be published in *COMMONWEAL*. The editors reserve the right not to award the prize.

Deadline: October 1, 1991. Announcement of Prize: December 15, 1991. The prize-winning essay will be published in *COMMONWEAL*'s January 17, 1992 issue. This essay will become the property of the Graymoor Ecumenical Institute. All other essays will be returned to their authors after January 1.

COMMONWEAL 15 Dutch Street New York, New York 10038

'THE GOOD SOCIETY'

SHAPING THE INSTITUTIONS THAT SHAPE US

ROBERT BELLAH
RICHARD MADSEN
WILLIAM SULLIVAN
ANN SWIDLER
STEVEN TIPTON

Walking in any American city today, one participates in a ritual that perfectly expresses the difficulty of being a good person in the absence of a good society. In the midst of affluence, perhaps with a guilty sense of the absurd wastefulness of the expensive meal, new blouse, or electronic gadget that has brought us to town, we pass homeless men or, often, women with children asking for money for food and shelter. Whether we give or withhold our spare change, we know that neither personal choice is the right one. We may experience the difficulty of helping the plight of homeless people as a painful individual moral dilemma, but the difficulty actually comes from failures of the larger institutions on which our common life depends.

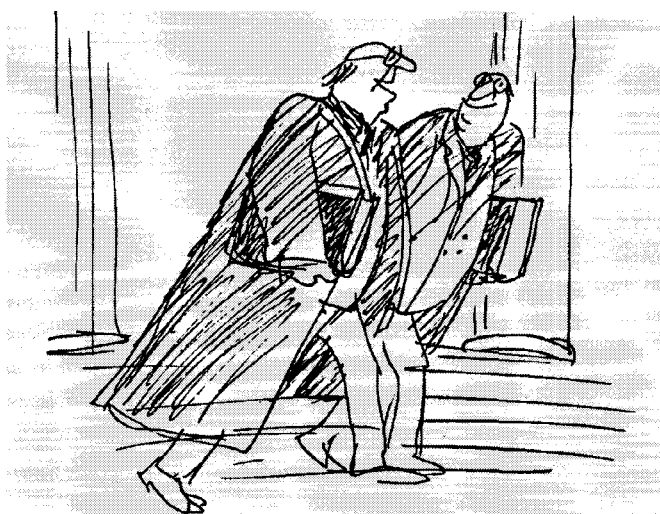
The problem of homelessness, like many of our problems, was created by social choices. The market-driven conversion of single-room occupancy hotels into upscale tourist accommodations, government urban-renewal projects that revitalized downtowns while driving up rents and reducing housing for the poor, economic changes that eliminated unskilled jobs paying enough to support a family, the states' "deinstitutionalization" of the mentally ill, and reduced funding of local community health programs have together created the crisis of homelessness. But with this issue, as with many others, we tend to feel helpless to shape the institutional order that made these choices meaningful—or meaningless.

It is tempting to think that the problems that we face today, from the homeless in our streets and poverty in the third world to ozone depletion and the greenhouse effect, can be solved by technology or technical expertise alone. But even to begin to solve these daunting problems, let alone problems of emptiness and meaninglessness in our personal lives, requires that we greatly

improve our capacity to think about our institutions. We need to understand how much of our lives are lived in and through institutions, and how better institutions are essential if we are to lead better lives.

One of the greatest challenges, especially for individualistic Americans, is to understand what institutions are—how we form them and how they in turn form us—and to imagine that we can actually alter them for the better.

In *Habits of the Heart* (University of California Press, 1985) we offered a portrait of middle-class Americans and of the cultural resources they have for making sense of their society and their lives. We described a language of individualistic achievement and self-fulfillment that often seems to make it difficult for people to sustain their commitments to others, either in intimate relationships or in the public sphere. We held up older traditions, biblical and civic republican, that had a better grasp on the truth that the individual is realized only in and through community; but we showed that contemporary Americans have difficulty understanding those traditions today or seeing how they apply to their lives. We called for a deeper understanding of the moral ecology that sustains the lives of all of us, even when we think we are making it on our own.



"Thank you. You're pretty damn 'august' yourself!"

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“Moral ecology” is only another way of speaking of healthy institutions, yet the culture of individualism makes the very idea of institutions inaccessible to many of us. We Americans tend to think that all we need are energetic individuals and a few impersonal rules to guarantee fairness. Anything more is not only superfluous but dangerous—corrupt, oppressive, or both. Americans often think of individuals pitted against institutions. It is hard for us to think of institutions as affording the necessary context within which we become individuals; of institutions as not just restraining but enabling us; of institutions not as an arena of hostility within which our character is tested but an indispensable source from which character is formed. This is in part because some of our institutions have indeed grown out of control and beyond our comprehension. But the answer is to change them, for it is illusory to imagine that we can escape them.

We need to understand why the very idea of institutions is so intimidating to Americans and why it is so important to overcome this anxiety and think creatively about institutions. In its formal sociological definition, an institution is a pattern of expected action of individuals or groups enforced by social sanctions, both positive and negative. For example, institutions may be such simple customs as the confirming handshake in a social situation, where the refusal to respond to an outstretched hand might cause embarrassment and some need for an explanation; or they may be highly formal institutions such as taxation upon which social services depend, where refusal to pay may be punished by fines and imprisonment. Institutions always have a moral element. A handshake is a sign of social solidarity, at least a minimal recognition of the personhood of the other. Taxation, especially in a democracy, is for the purpose of attaining agreed-upon common aims, and is supposed to be fair in its assessment.

Individualistic Americans fear that institutions impinge on their freedom. In the case of the handshake this impingement may give rise only to a very occasional qualm. More powerful institutions seem more directly to threaten our freedom. For just this reason, the classical liberal view held that institutions ought to be as far as possible neutral mechanisms for individuals to use to attain their separate ends—a view so persuasive that most Americans take it for granted, sharing with liberalism the fear that institutions that are not properly limited and neutral may be oppressive. This belief leads us to think of institutions as efficient or inefficient mechanisms, like the Department of Motor Vehicles, that we learn to use for our own purposes, or as malevolent “bureaucracies” that may crush us under their impersonal wheels. It is not that either of these beliefs is wholly mistaken. In modern society we do indeed need to learn how to manipulate institutions. Yet if this is our only conception of institutions we have a very impoverished idea of our common life, an idea that cannot effectively help us deal with our problems but only worsens them.

There is an ambiguity about the idea of institutions that is hard to avoid but that we will try to be clear about. Institutions are normative patterns embedded in and enforced by laws and mores (informal customs and practices). In common usage the term is also used to apply to concrete organizations. Organizations

certainly loom large in our lives, but if we think only of organizations and not of institutions we may greatly oversimplify our problems. The corporation is a central institution in American life. As an institution, it is a particular historical pattern of rights and duties, of powers and responsibilities, that make it a major force in our lives. Individual corporations are organizations that operate within the legal and other patterns that define what a corporation is. If we do not distinguish between institution and organization, we may think that our only problem with corporations is to make them more efficient or more responsible. But there are problems with how corporations are institutionalized in American society, with the underlying pattern of power and responsibility, and we cannot solve the problems of corporate life simply by improving individual organizations: we have to reform the institution itself.

If we confuse organizations and institutions, then when we believe we are being treated unfairly we may retreat into private life or flee from one organization to another—a different company or a new marriage—hoping that the next one will treat us better. But change in how organizations are conceived, changes in the norms by which they operate—institutional changes—are the only way to get at the source of our difficulties.

The same logic applies throughout our social life. There are certainly better families and worse, happier and more caring families and ones that are less so. But the very way Americans institutionalize family life, the pressures and temptations that American society presents to all families, are themselves the source of serious problems. So just asking individual families to behave better, important though that is, will not get to the root of the difficulties. Indeed there is a kind of reductionism in our traditional way of thinking about society. We think in the first place that the problem is probably with the individual; if not, then with the organization. This pattern of thinking hides from us the power of institutions and their great possibilities for good and for evil.

What is missing in this American view of society? Just the idea that in our life with other people we are engaged continuously, through words and actions, in creating and re-creating the institutions that make that life possible. This process is never neutral but is always ethical and political, since institutions (even such an intimate institution as the family) live or die by ideas of right and wrong and conceptions of the good. Conversely, while we in concert with others create institutions, they also create us: they educate us and form us—especially through the socially enacted metaphors they give us, metaphors that provide normative interpretations of situations and actions. The metaphors may be appropriate or inappropriate, but they are inescapable. A local congregation may think of itself as a “family.” A corporate CEO may speak of management and workers all being “team-players.” Democracy itself is not so much a specific institution as a metaphoric way of thinking about an aspect of many institutions.

In short, we are not self-created atoms manipulating or being manipulated by objective institutions. We form institutions and

they form us every time we engage in a conversation that matters, and certainly every time we act as parent or child, student or teacher, citizen or official, in each case calling on models and metaphors for the rightness and wrongness of action. Institutions are not only constraining but also enabling. They are the substantial forms through which we understand our own identity and the identity of others as we seek cooperatively to achieve a decent society.

The idea that institutions are objective mechanisms that are essentially separate from the lives of the individuals who inhabit them is an ideology which exacts a high moral and political price. The classical liberal view has elevated one virtue, autonomy, as almost the only good, but has failed to recognize that even autonomy depends on a particular kind of institutional structure, and is not an escape from institutions altogether. By imagining a world in which individuals can be autonomous not only from institutions but from each other, it has forgotten that autonomy, valuable as it is in itself, is only one virtue among others and that without such virtues as responsibility and care, which can be exercised only through institutions, autonomy itself becomes an empty form without substance.

The policy analyst David Kirp, in his book *Learning by Heart* (Rutgers University, 1989), gives moving examples of a richer conception of institutions. He and his associates studied a number of instances where public school systems were faced with the challenge of admitting children with AIDS. In a situation of extraordinary anxiety, superintendents, principals, teachers, and parents were called upon to decide what kind of school and what kind of community they wanted to have. The speech and behavior of institutional authorities took on enormous importance, as did the capacity of the parents to respond. Doctors could explain that the risks were exceedingly small but school administrators and parents had to decide whether any risk at all should be taken to extend the moral community to include a child in great need. Finding the right metaphor—seeing the child primarily as a human being in need of special compassion, or as a source of dangerous contamination—was critical to the outcome.

These stories illustrate the truth that the anthropologist Mary Douglas expressed in these words: "The most profound decisions about justice are not made by individuals as such, but by individuals thinking within and on behalf of institutions." We can extend her insight by saying that responsibility is something we exercise as individuals but within and on behalf of institutions. The character of certain individuals, particularly superintendents and principals, significantly influenced the outcome in school districts confronting AIDS panic. But that very character in part reflected the history and moral resources of the community as a whole. Administrators and parents changed the institutional definition of their schools and communities by how they responded to this major challenge. Those for whom the virtues of responsibility and care were determinative (and it is important that those virtues were located not only in them as individuals but in their sense of themselves as institutional representatives) thought not only that they had done the right thing but that they

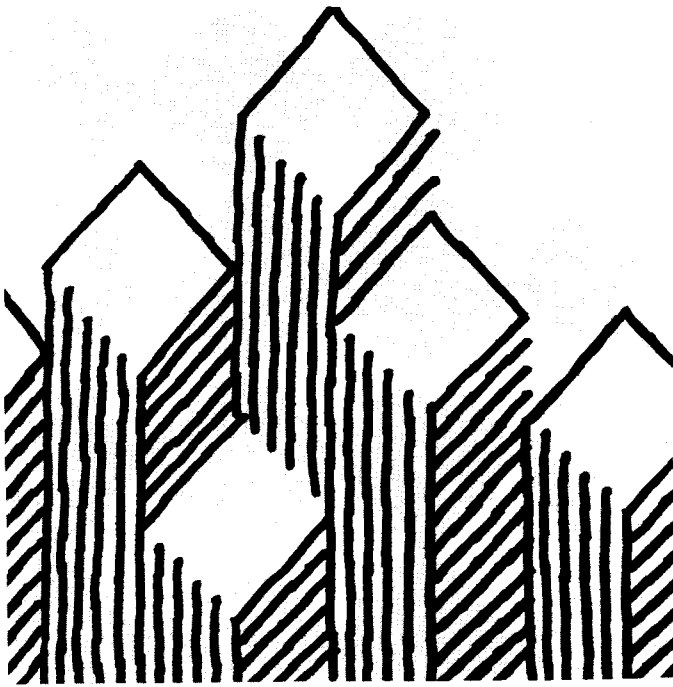
had taught their children a lesson more valuable than most of what they learn in the classroom. Those who, desiring to protect what was theirs, opted to reject the stigmatized child, remained closed, bitter, and defensive long after the event. Their children too had learned a lesson.

As we have said, the very idea of institutions is often repugnant to Americans. But whatever their conscious attitude, Americans are also deeply fascinated by the moral drama of institutions, at least when they understand them, or think they do, as in the case of sports.

Consider baseball, the national pastime. Tens of millions of fans depend for the excitement of a season not only upon the practice of the sport but on the institution of the leagues, with their complex athletic, economic, and legal rules. The drama of the annual pennant races is what it is only because the skills of players and teams are supported and guided by the less visible structure of coaches, umpires, accountants, and contracts. Equally crucial is the moral infrastructure of collective honor, loyalty, and devotion to the sport. For many fans the drama of baseball is heightened at those moments when the larger institutional patterns come into view—especially in moments of crisis, as when a team is separated from a city long identified with it, or when scandal shocks the public's sense of the honor and propriety that ought to govern the sport.

It is expected that star players are extraordinarily well paid; but when they allow their own image or their own self-indulgence to become more important than their contribution to the team, the enjoyment of the game changes to moral outrage, as it does when owners appear to be acting for private gain at the expense of the honest life of the sport. Why this indignation? At such moments the public acknowledges that moral norms are woven throughout baseball; shared indignation expresses the fans' tremendous moral identification with the sport as an institution. Clearly baseball in such moments is not being understood as a neutral device for individual satisfaction—if it were, who would care about scandals? Rather, baseball, with its purposes, codes, and standards, is a collective moral enterprise, an institution in the full sense, and many Americans care deeply about it. As an institution, baseball is more than the actual players and organizations who play the game during any given season. That is why we can see the sport as sometimes succeeding, sometimes failing, in becoming what baseball really ought to be. This understanding of things was beautifully expressed by the late Baseball Commissioner A. Bartlett Giamatti in his statement of August 10, 1989, concerning his decision to banish from the game for life the former baseball star and then-manager of the Cincinnati Reds, Pete Rose, as a result of Mr. Rose's gambling activities:

I believe baseball is a beautiful and exciting game, loved by millions—I among them—and I believe that baseball is an important, enduring American institution. It must assert and aspire to the highest of principles—of integrity, of professionalism of performance, of fair play within its rules. It will come as no surprise that like any institution composed of human beings, this institution will not always



fulfill its highest aspirations. I know of no earthly institution that does. But this one, because it is so much a part of our history as a people and because it has such a purchase on our national soul, has an obligation to the people for whom it is played—to its fans and its well-wishers—to strive for excellence in all things and to promote the highest ideals.

I will be told that I am an idealist. I hope so. I will continue to locate ideals I hold for myself and for my country in the national game as well as in other of our national institutions. And there will be debate and dissent about this or that or another occurrence on or off the field, and while the game's nobler parts will always be enmeshed in the human frailties of those who, whatever their role, have stewardship of this game, let there be no doubt or dissent about the goal of baseball or our dedication to it. Nor about our vigilance and vigor—and patience—in protecting the game from blemish or stain or disgrace.

Sports fans intuitively understand things important for all Americans to know. Their enthusiasm for institutionalized sports enables them to recognize that individual excellence depends on collectively maintained codes of honor and discipline. As generations of coaches have claimed and athletes have affirmed, sports teach and form character. But so do all institutions: in this they are not so much unique as exemplary.

Institutions are patterns of social activity that give shape to collective and individual experience. An institution is a complex whole that guides and sustains individual identity, as a family gives sense and purpose to the lives of its members, enabling them to realize themselves as spouses, parents, and children. Institutions form individuals by making possible or impossible certain ways of behaving and relating to others. They shape character by assigning responsibility, demanding accountability, and providing the standards in terms of which each person rec-

ognizes the excellence of his or her achievements. Each individual's possibilities depend on the opportunities opened up within the institutional contexts to which that person has access. Without the collective effort represented by the teams on the field, there could be no grand slams.

Institutions, then, are essential bearers of ideals and meanings; yet in the real world the embodiment is imperfect. The achievement of individual ends, like the carrying out of patterned social activity on which it always depends, requires material resources. It also involves the use of power. For this reason all institutions—armies, teams, and even families—are necessarily involved to some degree with both wealth and power. These means all too easily become ends in themselves. Institutions become corrupt, some more so than others. The enormous amount of money at stake in professional sports has introduced an element of corruption so profound that many fans are deeply cynical about the sport that at the same time they also deeply love. Indeed, it is just at the point where the relative clarity of the game is clouded over by purely business considerations and power conflicts that disillusionment sets in. Suddenly an institution we thought we understood well begins to look like the institutions we don't understand at all. What seemed morally clear is now morally ambiguous. It is no wonder that Americans have an often-noted allergy to large institutions—though, as in the case of sports, even in our cynicism we continue to depend on them.

But corruption can be recognized and criticized. If the ideals embodied in an institution are not totally dead, they stand as a judgment against the corruption of their embodiment. This is something we often overlook. The heroic individual who cleans up the corrupt institution is a staple figure of our lore in movies and television. It is easy not to notice that the honest cop and the crusading reporter, in the very act of resisting corruption, are drawing upon and enacting norms and ideals at the core of the institutions with which they struggle. When heroism has a lasting effect, it is because it has worked catalytically to reignite the dedication of others to the highest codes of the police or of journalism. That is, it must find expression in reformed institutions.

Sports help us to see that at the core of any viable institution there is a moral code which must be periodically reinvigorated so that the institution may survive and flourish. Sports do not help us to see when our institutions are in such serious difficulty that drastic institutional innovations are required. Family and sports often serve us well as institutional metaphors to help us make sense of our world. But the problems our society faces today require that we expand our repertory beyond these familiar examples, that we think hard and critically about what has too long been taken for granted.

A successful life in American society depends on the ability to negotiate competently a series of requirements, primarily to show technical competence and secondarily to demonstrate the ability to deal effectively with other people. The educational system dovetails with the occupational system in maintaining these emphases. Socialization in the middle-class family rein-

forces this pattern through its emphasis on doing well in school, being competitive (in sports as well as studies), and getting along with others. In family, leisure, school, and work the fine calculation of the relation of means to ends is emphasized, and this gives rise to the pattern of utilitarian individualism which we described in *Habits of the Heart*, a pattern moderated only partly by the attention to human relations—expressive individualism—for the emphasis here, too, is heavily strategic.

Life in this paradigm is a competitive race to acquire the objective markers (College Boards, admission to the right school, GPA, LSAT, advanced degree, entry into the right organization, promotion to higher-echelon positions) that give access to all the good things that make life worthwhile (attractiveness to a desirable mate, purchase of an appropriate home, American Express Gold Card, vacations in Europe). But what this form of life minimizes, if it does not neglect it altogether, is any larger moral meaning, any contribution to the common good, that might help it to make sense. So while there are many rules, and the rules operate so as to put great pressure on us to conform to them, there are few reasons. In short, it is not just the “big institutions” that don’t make sense but our own lives. Beyond following the rules that tell us how to get ahead, we have trouble making moral sense of our immediate actions.

From the individual point of view, the educational and occupational systems appear to have an objective givenness that puts them beyond question. Failure or refusal to adapt to them has the inevitable consequence of depriving a person of access to precisely the rewards that in this paradigm make life worthwhile. The presence of large numbers of people in our society who have failed in these regards serves as an admonition to make sure one does not join them, but it also, even if subliminally, raises questions about the legitimacy of the whole pattern. Part of the problem is that we do not bring the sense of institutional meaning that we intuitively have about baseball to bear on the educational, economic, and administrative institutions that demand so much from us. We think what is required here is only a high level of competence, of expertise, of “professionalism,” not the moral wisdom that should be at the basis of any good institution. And when things go wrong, we tend to blame individuals, we decry their lack of “ethics,” but we don’t question the morality of the institutions themselves.

There is a profound gap in our culture between technical reason, the knowledge with which we design computers or analyze the structure of DNA, and practical or moral reason, the ways we understand how we should live. We often hear that only technical reason can really be taught, and our educational commitments from primary school to university seem to embody that belief. But technical reason alone is insufficient to manage our social difficulties or make sense of our lives. What we need to know is not simply how to build a powerful computer or how to redesign DNA but precisely and above all what to do with that knowledge. As the power of our ability to manipulate the world grows, the poverty of our understanding of what to do with that knowledge becomes more apparent. Even when we see that the solution must have something to do with institutions, we once again look for a technical solution in some kind of “management science”

rather than in trying to understand the inherently moral nature of institutions themselves.

Ironically, the confusion and nihilism that threaten us are related to the commitment to reason, knowledge, and education that has always been central to American success. This country has rightly celebrated the intelligence of an educated citizenry, the common sense of the merchant or tinkerer, and, more recently, the scientific and technical leader. But just at the point when our citizens depend more and more on knowledge, we face a crisis about the purposes and meaning of that knowledge.

It is easy to see this as a personal problem, to say that Americans have become selfish, self-indulgent, spoiled by affluence and readily available consumer goods; or as a cultural problem, to say that we have lost the work ethic and have come to believe that the good life is a life of hedonism and comfort. But it is also, and perhaps primarily, an institutional problem. Our institutions today—from the family to the school to the corporation to the public arena—do not challenge us to use all our capacities so that we have a sense of enjoyable achievement and of contributing to the welfare of others. We tend to accept our institutions as they come, passively, and we do not see clearly enough how some of them operate to encourage that passivity. In the case of dysfunctional institutions, we have simply tried to escape from them and have allowed them to fall apart rather than reform and revitalize them. In the case of coercive institutions, we have submitted to them as though they were unchangeable natural forces. And the malaise is palpable: a loss of meaning in family and job, a distrust of politics, a disillusion with organized religion.

American culture has focused relentlessly on the idea that individuals are self-interest maximizers and that private accumulation and private pleasures are the only measurable public goods. We have been blind to the way that institutions enable or cripple our capacity to be the persons we most want to be. We need to understand historically how we came to think that individual freedom is the highest good, that institutions stand in the way of our freedom. We need to understand how we failed to see that the virtue in autonomy, in the sense of personal freedom, can be realized only along with other virtues, such as care and responsibility. Our present problems are the result of historical conditions, not of some inevitable historical law. They are the result of actual choices that people have made in history, choices made without awareness of what the consequences would be if everyone made similar choices.

We hope to renew earlier efforts to create an American public philosophy less trapped in the clichés of rugged individualism and more open to an invigorating, fulfilling sense of social responsibility. But responsible social participation, with an enlightened citizenry that can deal with moral and intellectual complexity, does not come about just from exhortation. It is certainly not enough simply to implore our fellow citizens to “get involved.” We must create the institutions that will enable such participation to occur, encourage it, and make it fulfilling as well as demanding.

ENABLED FOR THE KINGDOM

A REFLECTION ON CELIBACY

LUCRETIA B. YAGHJIAN

Praise the lives you did not choose.
They will heal you, tell your story,
fight for you.

Marge Piercy, "The Sabbath of Mutual Respect," from
Circles on the Water: Selected Poems

Although the Reverend Paul E. Dinter's article, "Disabled for the Kingdom: Celibacy, Scripture, and Tradition" (*Commonweal*, October 12, 1990), must be commended for its prophetic critique of the "heroic" model of clerical celibacy, his alternative model of the celibate as one "disabled for the Kingdom" is problematic. While I do not deny the serious problems confronting a church committed to mandatory clerical celibacy at this time in our history, Dinter's analysis of those problems and his paradoxical appeal to disability as a means of grace prompted me to ask, "What are the models of celibacy we have, and what are the models we need?"

This is a difficult question to ask when so many in the church—both celibate and lay—are asking whether we need celibacy at all. What is most troubling, however, is the propensity in the current conversation to identify psychosexual maturity with marriage and family, and the corresponding tendency to name celibacy a less mature, compensatory, and inferior life choice. As Paul Dinter wisely pointed out, such maturity does not come naturally to the married or the celibate person; but I disagree with his too-easy equation of marriage with the psychosexual model of mature adult choice. Where is the diversity of human personality and vocation? Where is the purity of heart to will one thing in marriage or in celibacy? Where is our ability to see celibacy and marriage not in competition, but as complementary ways of being for the Kingdom?

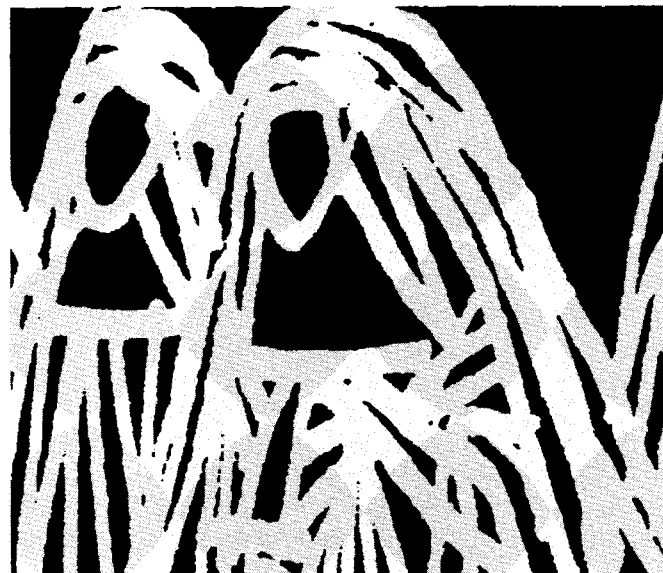
A wedding band is not an infallible sign of psychosexual maturity, any more than a clerical collar or a religious vow is an incontrovertible sign of "disability." People choose marriage and celibacy for a multitude of reasons, but marriage is confirmed and rewarded in our society in ways that celibacy no longer is. It is the celibate woman or man today who chooses "the road less traveled by," and in this climate that choice must resonate beyond the entrance requirements of an authoritarian or anachro-

nistic church. The scandals and the perversions of some of those who have made the choice for celibacy we will always have with us, but marriages made in heaven are no less vulnerable to sins of the flesh. Does that mean, however, that we tell our daughters and sons not to choose marriage?

There are as many reasons to remain celibate as there are to be married, and many of those reasons do not eventuate in priesthood or religious community. For some, celibacy is a life's condition rather than an actively chosen "given." For others, celibacy is mandated by a prior call to will one thing. For those who accept celibacy as a prerequisite to a religious vocation, there are as many who accept marriage as a condition of living with the person one loves, and for the sake of that loved one, "forsaking all others."

For others (and indeed for most) marriage means progeny, and a continuation of one's heritage which is often, for the celibate, the most difficult sacrifice of all. Yet is there not at the heart of marriage a profound commitment to conjugal fidelity, as there is at the center of celibate life a comparable commitment to the community one has chosen? And are there not times in our lives when an inexplicable longing for the road we have not taken takes us by surprise, whether we are surrounded by spouses, children and grandchildren, or grieving our lack of them?

Such is the suggestion in the film *Babette's Feast*, adapted



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from the original story by Karen Blixen (Isak Dinesen), wherein a prominent Danish general, Lorens Loewenhielm, meets a former sweetheart, Martine—now an elderly spinster—at a dinner party provided and prepared by her French maid Babette in honor of Martine’s deceased father’s birthday. For the sake of their father and the ascetic Scandinavian sect for whom he was founder and minister, she and her sister had never married.

Many years earlier, in awe of Martine’s purity and ashamed of his passion, the young officer Loewenhielm had fled her father’s pious flock, married a woman befitting his ambitions in life, and devoted himself to a military career. Finding himself seated across the table from her so many years later, the general contemplates his road not taken in a vision which he shares with the gathered company. In the rosy flush of the *Veuve Cliquot* 1860 reserved especially for him by Babette, he sees his life not as a culmination of choices made and refused, but as a continuum of choices granted—even those which were refused. As he says:

We tremble before making our choice in life, and after having made it again tremble in fear of having chosen wrong. But the moment comes when our eyes are opened, and we see and realize that grace is infinite. . . . See! that which we have chosen is given us, and that which we have refused is, also and at the same time, granted us. . . . For mercy and truth have met together, and righteousness and bliss have kissed one another.

The speaker of this profound prophecy admittedly trembled before personal choices which were free of ecclesiastical or political mandates. The choice for ecclesiastical celibacy, on the other hand, is compulsory, and requires repudiations which one might not otherwise have chosen. Nevertheless, those who choose this “disability” do so not only for institutional reasons, but for intuitive reasons that reason itself does not know. That some of those reasons may signal emotional limitation and immaturity, we have had ample evidence in the recent press; but no more so, I argue, than the evidence we will always have with us of marital immaturity, instability, and infidelity and the tragic “disabilities” accruing upon the children of such marriages.

When I ask again in the light of all this, “What models of celibacy do we have, and what models do we need?” I remember my own Protestant upbringing, which offered me no models of celibacy beyond those terrifying pre-Vatican II nuns who inhabited a mysterious, habit-swathed world so far from my own as to be on another planet. Growing up female and Protestant in the fifties was tantamount to being taught that the only fate worse than being an old maid was that of being a nun, and I learned that cultural lesson very well.

While my Catholic schoolmates were learning about Saint Theresa and Elizabeth of Hungary, I was reading *The Nun’s Story* and *I Leapt Over the Wall* with a morbid fascination. Moreover, the inexhaustible repertoire of “nun’s stories” with which those schoolmates regaled me did nothing to get me to a nunnery; on the contrary, I suspected every nun I saw of being

the wicked witch of the West in disguise, and I thanked God often that I wasn’t one of their pupils!

While Catholic priests fared better in my private mythology, my family distrusted their celibacy as well. On the one occasion that the local parish priest offered a friend and me a ride home from a late commuter train, I was scolded severely for trusting anyone “just because he wears his collar backward.” So much for the heroic model of celibacy in my household! Yet this prejudice against celibacy was not peculiar to my family history. When I was a sophomore in college, my first professor-mentor encouraged me not to model myself after a distinguished, but unmarried, woman professor in the same department. “She is a fine teacher and scholar, but she might as well be a nun. We don’t want that life for you,” he said emphatically—and there the matter ended.

Perhaps he knew more about me than I then knew about myself, for I did not dream of celibacy or the convent as a young woman; I dreamed of marriage and a husband, and in time that dream came true. After seventeen years of living that dream, I understand what Babette’s general meant. Both what I chose and what I refused was given to me in a husband, lover, and best friend, and “that has made all the difference.” Yet to grow up with no affirming models of celibacy was an impoverishment for me; it limited my imagination of vocation, and it denied me a cultural dream which “cradle Catholics” take for granted, whether or not they embrace it. I would not exchange that dream for my reality today, but it took Vatican II and my own Roman Catholic conversion to unfold the paradoxical seduction of celibacy for one whose heart aches for God.

I do not have children of my own, but if I did, I would want them to know that there are choices in life open to them that Bud Anderson whose “father knew best” and the Simpsons have not dreamed of; that the nuclear family is not the only community worth living and loving for; that people still take vows of celibacy for the love of God and neighbor, and not merely to meet the Vatican’s requirements or to mask neuroses. I would hope that Mother Theresa and Oscar Romero would be among their heroes, and that women and men choosing religious life and priesthood at the brink of the twenty-first century would be among their friends. Should they be led to embrace such a vocation themselves, I would indeed wish that its embodiment in celibacy or marriage could be freely chosen rather than mandated from on high; but with W.H. Auden’s Gabriel, I would still assure them that

...it lies

Within your power of choosing to

Conceive the Child who chooses you.

However we may struggle politically for the end of compulsory celibacy or for the institution of a married clergy, the poetry of our life choices is written in another key; and in the light of that poetry, the Kingdom of God is larger than the choices we make and the choices that are made for us. The struggle for models of celibacy that are freely chosen rather than compelled must continue, and I praise those who articulate that struggle and commit themselves to it; but I must also praise the lives I did not choose, for they have—as Marge Piercy wrote, “healed me, told my story, fought for me.” □

HEIRS OF THE KINGDOM?

THE CHILDREN OF MARRIED PRIESTS

JOSEPH H. FICHTER

Most American Catholic priests who resigned the active ministry since Vatican II got married and soon thereafter—not unexpectedly—began to father children. Many of these youngsters are now teen-agers ready to talk about their experiences. In this country we face a brand-new Catholic phenomenon: a unique generation fathered by clergy who no longer live in parish rectories or religious communities. Many stories have been told about Protestant ministers' children who are brighter, more religious, and better behaved than the children of nonclergy parents. There is also the stereotype of the rebellious youth who is "fed up" with too much religion in the parsonage and fails to do credit to his parents.

The priests' children we tell about here ought to be a special kind of young Catholic because their parents belong to the National Association for a Married Priesthood, known previously as CORPUS (Corps of Reserve Priests United for Service). In the *CORPUS Directory* of 1990, we found 217 clergy couples who have 385 "young adult" children (fifteen years of age and older). Children from a previous marriage of the wife were excluded, in order to avoid the special problem of stepchildren. The brief two-page questionnaire we sent to each of these youngsters drew 233 completed and usable responses, an appreciable return rate of 61 percent. Two-thirds of them are teen-agers still in high school, and the answers came from more girls than boys (54 percent to 46 percent). They reside in all nine U.S. Census regions, with most in the Midwest and fewest in the South. Three out of five (61 percent) of the fathers had been diocesan priests, and more than half (55 percent) of the mothers had been religious sisters.

What do these youngsters say about themselves and their parents? Are they just normal Catholic teen-agers, or are they something more, and different? One high-school girl said, "being the child of a priest is no different than being the child of a doctor or a lawyer." One male respondent, however, a college sophomore, said that he can "sense" the persons who come from priest-families. "I can still pick out an ex-priest, or an ex-nun, just by their movement, action, and vocabulary alone. Growing up with a priest-father is a very interesting experience, especially having Mass at home."

The fathers in these families, and many of the mothers, took up a second vocation when they switched from the celibate to

the married life. It was a "delayed" vocation, as well as a delayed parenthood, since they were on the average about ten years older than the age when most Americans marry. "One of the things you notice is that your father is older than other fathers." One girl complained that "the church prevented him from marrying and having a family earlier."

One college girl, whose mother had been a nun, said that her parents had difficulty in relating to teen-agers because they had spent their youth in the seminary and the convent, and had never experienced a "normal adolescence." Another high-school boy said, "My dad is usually very serious and never has taken enough time to just have fun." On the other hand, a college co-ed wrote: "My father has set an example of humility, gentleness, compassion, deep love, and faith." A younger high-schooler said, "I like the rebellious attitude my dad has toward the church. It has given me a healthy perspective which he transferred to me. He is not antichurch but says we have to be productively critical." In a lighter vein, a high-school senior said, "the parents of my dates trust me more." Furthermore, "to tell the story that your parents were a priest and a nun is a great ice-breaker at parties."

It seemed important to know whether their fathers shared the CORPUS goal of seeking readmission to the active priesthood. More than six out of ten (63 percent) say they know their father wants to go back to the official priestly ministry. The majority (73 percent) are aware also that their father has gone through the process of "laicization." One gets the impression, however, that this formal rescript is not taken seriously by either children or parents.

There are no reliable statistics reporting the number of married resigned priests in the United States, much less the number of former women religious who married these priests. In the jargon of a simplistic psychology, one may suggest that for many former nuns there is a love-hate relationship between themselves and the Catholic church. If they had negative reasons for leaving the convent, they may remain critical of Catholicism. On the other hand, they are married to priests who want to get back into the active priesthood and bring their wives with them. This ambivalence toward church and religion may help to explain some of the responses of their children.

Six out of ten of the mothers are married to resigned diocesan priests, the remainder to men from religious orders. (This approximates the national statistics of 65 percent diocesan men in the active ministry.) A higher proportion of ex-nuns (69 percent), than of the other mothers (52 percent), have married diocesan

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priests. We can only speculate why there is this disproportion. The great majority of diocesan priests—as compared to religious-order priests—are engaged in ministry at the parish level; it is likely that sisters teaching in the parochial schools meet their future husbands in that setting.

All the children of resigned priests were baptized and confirmed in the Catholic church and had received their first Holy Communion, but about half (48 percent) had not attended Catholic elementary or secondary school, and only 16 percent report attendance at both levels of Catholic education. We wanted to know whether those surveyed identify with the institutional church through parish membership, which would ordinarily be the case with Catholic school students. Half of these children, however, admit that they are not active in their local parish, except for attendance at Sunday Mass. The others do participate in a variety of ways: in CCD classes and study groups, as ushers, lectors, and choir members. Most of the respondents are “practicing” Catholics, some of them enthusiastically so. They appear to be quite content to accept the religious counsel and guidance of their parents. It is the exception who has negative feelings about Catholicism.

The common criteria for the measure of active Catholicism are in the frequency of Mass and the sacraments. We asked these youngsters about their attendance at Mass during the past two years, and the great majority (69 percent) said that they have “often” gone to Mass. They gave the same proportional response about the frequency of receiving Holy Communion. In about one-third (36 percent) of these families, Mass attendance is “made easy” for the children because their father regularly celebrates Mass at home or among the neighbors though the Vatican prohibits the public celebration of the Eucharist by noncanonical priests.

When asked about the sacrament of reconciliation, “going to confession,” the great majority (73 percent) report that they “seldom” (31 percent) or “never” (42 percent) had entered the confessional during the past two years. We did not ask them about their habits of personal prayer, but when it came to reading the Bible, almost eight out of ten (78 percent) admit that they seldom, or never, read the Scriptures.

We asked no direct question about their own moral conduct, to indicate the degree to which they personally conform to the ethical tenets of the Catholic religion. Interestingly enough, however, we found only one out of five (21 percent) “depends on the church for moral guidance,” girls (26 percent), more than boys (14 percent). We asked them to make a judgment about several forms of moral behavior. The label of “always wrong” was placed proportionately on the following items: Cheating on term papers or exams, 77 percent; telling racial and ethnic jokes, 43 percent; drunkenness, 33 percent; and premarital sex, 21 percent.

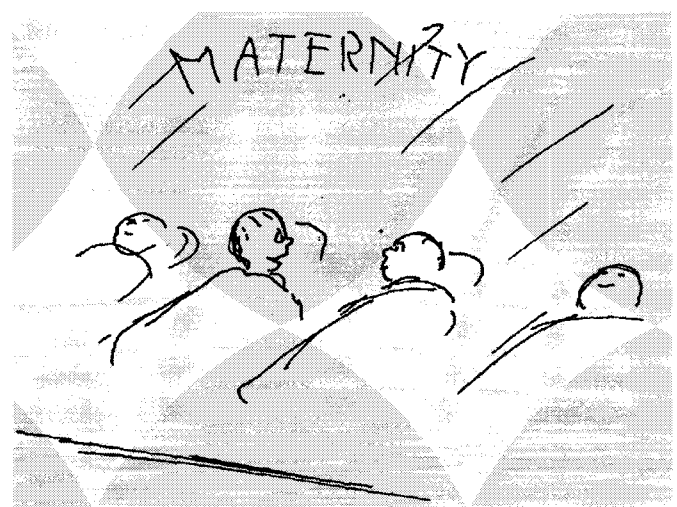
Our hypothesis was that the children of Catholic clergy parents are more likely to be “Catholic” in their beliefs and practices than children who were raised in otherwise “normal” Catholic families. We used some of the same questionnaire items in a

survey of 244 first-year students at a Catholic college. Comparing the two groups, we found similarities, in the proportions who have a personal relationship with God and who agree that religion gives meaning to life. An interesting difference, however, was that the children of priests are less likely (21 percent) than the college students (34 percent) to say that they look to the church for moral guidance. Nevertheless, the children of priests are much more likely than the college students to attend Mass and receive Communion “often.”

Many of the youngsters in our initial study did not have the benefits of formal Catholic education. Nevertheless, they are far out in front of the Catholic college students in their support of the bishops’ social teaching. They are much stronger in favor of social welfare for the poor (73 percent to 43 percent); more in favor of help to alien immigrants (52 percent to 18 percent); and are more in opposition to the death penalty (47 percent to 26 percent). The parental influence for progressive social thinking has undoubtedly accounted for their children’s attitude to social change.

Despite widespread discussion on the issue, it is still the “thinking of the church,” as expressed in solemn Vatican documents, that priests of the Latin rite should not be married men. The young respondents of this survey, however, overwhelmingly agree that “diocesan priests be allowed to marry.” It has been the continual aspiration and hope of their parents, as members of CORPUS, that the celibacy provision be removed from the church’s procedures and that they themselves be readmitted as married priests. Their children support the aims of CORPUS.

In a second opinion that is also clearly in opposition to current thinking among the church hierarchy, these youngsters voted (71 percent) in favor of the ordination of women to the priesthood. In this instance, they appear to be more liberal than their parents, who had discussed this matter at great lengths in the several annual conferences of the National Association for a Married Priesthood. Clergy wives, the mothers of these young Catholics, had sometimes argued that a crusade for women’s ordination might distract from their own primary goal of their husbands’ reinstatement in the institutional priesthood. It is probably to



“I tell you, a kid born today is an informed kid!”

Our survey found that a higher percentage of sons of former clergy (34 percent) think of a "church vocation" than do the daughters (22 percent). We had surmised that the ex-nun mother might have a more positive influence in inclining these young people toward a church-related direction. However, the statistics in our survey indicate that the children of ex-nuns are less likely (24 percent) than the children of other mothers (32 percent) to express such a vocational interest. In the present instance, it

Prospective diocesan seminarians, however, may vaguely hope for a change in the celibacy demands of the priesthood. The young people from “clergy” families we surveyed have become accustomed to the notion of a married priest who is their parent, and they are almost universally in favor of a married priesthood. With the proportion of children of married priests showing an interest in the church vocation higher than any other category of youth outside the seminary, one may ironically suggest that the best source of vocations to the priesthood may be among the children of priests who are not allowed to function as priests. □

THOMAS A. McCABE

I had wanted to be a priest since I was fourteen and so I entered the minor seminary in high school. I, too, had a Christ-dream and I could think of no more exciting a life than to be a priest.

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I could think of nothing more important than to “save souls” and “build the Kingdom of God.”

This Christ-dream drove me to ordination and to Puerto Rico to learn Spanish and to come back to work in an African-American and Puerto Rican parish. I read. I read Dorothy Day in the *Catholic Worker* and John Cogley’s weekly columns in *Commonweal*. I read *Worship*, the monthly herald of the liturgical movement. I read Cardinal Cardijn and material on the Lay Apostolate Movement. I read Hans Küng and Yves Congar and the documents of Vatican II.

I prayed. With a group of other priests I joined the Fraternity of Charles de Foucauld. I tried to spend one hour each day in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. I prepared for Mass. I never missed the Divine Office. I said the rosary alone and with the Legion of Mary. I went on an annual retreat. I went to confession regularly. I had a spiritual director.

I had good friends, both priest friends with whom I played ball and ate and drank, and lay friends whom I loved, and who loved and respected me.

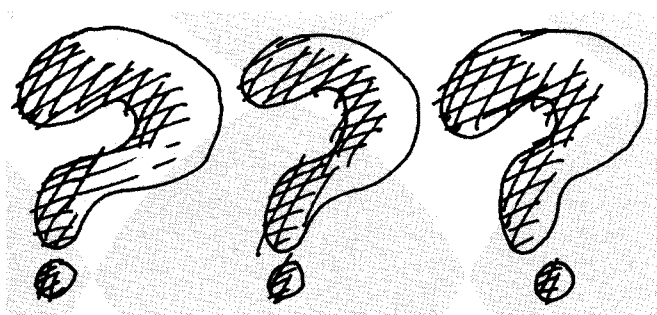
I went to bed alone each night—that was part of the life. I lived with two other priests in a team ministry. We planned together, worked together, and prayed together. Being a bishop or a monsignor was the furthest thing from my mind. I was very happy to be a parish priest. I was peaceful.

During these years I was working in the parish with another person, a woman. She was as committed to the gospels, to the church, and to the people as I was (maybe more so). Over a period of about three years, I realized I was more at peace, more comfortable, more whole, more myself with her than with any other person. For years I had enjoyed going to confirmation parties and hearing “priest stories.” For years I had enjoyed skiing in the winter in Vermont and swimming in the summer in Puerto Rico with my priest friends. For years I had loved working with the team in the rectory. But over a period of time I realized this exclusive male companionship was no longer for me.

Confirmation parties became awful. I no longer wanted to go on vacation with my priest friends and live in a rectory with other men. It was not loneliness that was driving me to seek the companionship of a woman, rather it was the very core of who I was. I was a man, a Christian, a priest who knew in my heart that my love for this woman was as much a part of me, my priesthood, and my call from God as celibacy was.

Years ago I knew I was called by God to be a priest. If that meant celibacy, then it meant celibacy. I hardly thought about it, much less agonized over it. This calling from God was obviously not a calling that I heard with my ears. Rather it meant that I was most peaceful, most comfortable, most in touch with myself when I thought of myself as a priest and later when I was ordained and was doing priestly things like celebrating Mass, preaching, counseling, and working with young people. This is how I “knew” I had a vocation. I could not picture myself being anything else except a priest.

What changed? Did I “lose” my priestly vocation? Had I turned away from God? Did I still want to be a priest? No, I did not



think I had “lost” my priestly vocation. No, I did not think I had turned away from God or the Lord from me. Yes, I still wanted to be a priest. What had changed was my inner-being, my conscience. The teaching church had always taught me that I must follow an informed conscience. Of course the presumption was that a truly “informed” conscience will follow the teachings of the church. But the doctrine of an informed conscience is double-edged because such a conscience can find a different path and travel it without guilt. So here I was, a peaceful priest, praying, talking to my spiritual director, and knowing that no matter what my church said, the priesthood was my calling; but celibacy was not. What a hypocrite I would have been to listen to God in my inmost being when it came to priesthood but not listen when it came to marriage. So with great pain and sadness I left the active ministry and applied for and received a dispensation from my promise of celibacy.

Well, what have I learned from this? Has marriage been great? Has it fulfilled all of my needs and desires? I am happy to say that marriage has been great. The raising of children has been a worry but also a joy. Marriage has not fulfilled all my needs and desires but I never expected it could. Augustine was right when he said, “You have made us for yourself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.” There is loneliness and disappointment and frustration in marriage but there is also intimacy and sharing and support. Just as I am sure that, for some, celibacy is the way to live as peaceful priests because it is their calling from God, so I am equally sure that for others, marriage is the way to live as peaceful priests because it is their calling from God.

Let me add another reflection, one that comes from within me, but one that speaks to the experience of other married priests as well. I have never loved a “job” as much as I loved the “job” of being a priest. I have been a teacher and a special education administrator for years. It is good work but it does not give me the same satisfaction I found as a priest. This is my loss but it is also a loss for the church and for the parish that I could have served for the past twenty years.

These reflections have not been written from anger that destroys, but from love that sheds light on the workings of the spirit in the church and in individual souls. It was not written to change the mind of the Vatican on mandatory celibacy. It was written to be another piece in the ongoing dialogue on the priesthood today. In this dialogue we must not overlook the rich, faith-filled experience of either the peaceful celibate or the married priest. After all, we both have something to say about this Christ-dream that we have pursued over these many years. □

S.E. Mead

Summer Vacation

The landscape as in a fever:
hard edges melting, amorphous
anatomy, a rosy illumination.
Touchy to mention it, some grand
deception passing for passion.
Must be the heat, this tropic's
paradisical dream time—
golf courses, shopping malls,
swimming pools glimpsed through
high iron fences in billboard
technicolor. Salmonella's common
and, from backed up sewers, micro-
scopic parasites disclose the
matrix of a landfill.

Here is the critical stability
of somebody comatose, little
desultory tell-tale clues tracing
aristocracy to a honeycomb swollen
only with uninterpretable buzzings,
some phantom war's cancer, the slick
palm-lined streets elusive undercurrent
of struggle. In fact, there is diffi-
culty here: the dialect cultures filter,
each keeping contact to bare minimum
while flaunting ethnocentricity
naive as tourists, yes, unintention-
ally obtuse—these patrolled
memorials waving flags, like
leaflets, of Magna Carta ideals.

Carl L. Bankston III

Light Along the Erie Canal

Across the water's surface, curves
corner the sun and heave it forth
in glimmers, as man's mind serves
to catch, reflect a sun-like force
in scattered sparks. Above, the birds
scoop waves in wind, ripple and pour
between suns caught on air and earth.
From their flexions flash darts
as bright as those between the shores.
Reflections from the feathers start
an echo of light. Other courses
seize it, toss it, off arrows of bark,
edges of leaves, and crooks of boughs;
shared about, like bits of loaves,
white fragments broken from a first
gold crust and shared along the rows.

Carl L. Bankston III

The Castle at Santorini

Image of a skull, the ruined castle sat there
on the hillside. Sockets of empty windows
showed the road their aged, sightless stare.

We climbed the stairs, bent beneath our packs,
as if we were two thieves, hauling our loads
of goods and guilt slung across our backs.

A living village spilled from still, dead stones;
mocking children and goats traced our tracks
through the bone-white dust around their squalid
homes.

But when we reached the top, they left us there.
Inside the skull, we hung from the hill alone;
alone but for the sun nailed in the air—

whose beams crossed through the cracks,
everywhere.

PLUMB LINE TO THE SOUL

AMELIO'S 'OPEN DOORS'

Detours are always at hand to keep us well away from the heart of a masterpiece. At least three of these alternate routes were being feverishly investigated in the lobby of the theater where I had just seen *Open Doors*.

The liberal overpass: "I loved the anticapital punishment stand this movie took but I don't know if I can recommend it to my more conservative friends."

The mass-cult freeway: "Don't you think it was too slow? I thought it was too slow. Maybe Italians have longer attention spans than ours. Anyway, I thought it was too slow. And too repetitive."

The Karl Marx tunnel of eternal night: "Sure, this flick has a leftist stance, but it doesn't have the proletarian fervor of, say, Bertolucci's *1900*. I mean, Bertolucci really makes you see history on the hoof. Those crowds milling around, those screaming peasants...."

Steering my way toward the exit through a traffic jam of instant opinion, I found myself for the first time wishing that an extraordinary new film had come out immediately in video format. Indeed, Gianni Amelio's grave, radical (philosophically, not politically), and very wise movie will play admirably in the privacy of your home, sometime after midnight, when even the most loved of loved ones are in bed, though you, for some strange reason, want to trouble yourself into more hours of sleeplessness. *Open Doors* is so wise about the sheer peril of being alive that it makes you a little frightened of your own heartbeat.

The story is one by the Sicilian novelist Leonardo Sciascia. In 1937, a Palermo bureaucrat, Scalia, murders the supervisor who has sacked him, the underling who has replaced him, and his own wife. An instant, execrated celebrity, Scalia doesn't merely plead guilty; he demands the firing squad. Public opinion cries out for blood but so does the justice department of Mussolini's government because, though proclaiming fervent allegiance to Il Duce, the killer has also bragged that his brutal act "cleansed" some of the corruption of the Fascist municipality. His boast is as brazen and cryptic as his crime and it arouses the curiosity of one of the justices trying the case. Judge DiFrancesco, fascinated not only by this case but by the quirkiness of human nature, resists the persuasions of his judicial colleagues and the much less subtle pressure of the national government to wrap things up. He refuses to accept the apparent lunacy of the crimes, insists on connecting the murders of the bureaucrats with the slaughter of the wife, shrewdly follows up leads, calls the crucial witnesses, asks the right questions.

The outcome? The revelation of an encompassing, cancer-like irrationality of which the multiple murders were the products; the uncovering of a network of immorality, both private and

public; the bestowal of a dubious mercy on a man who doesn't want it; the establishment of a just precedent, immediately undermined by the wheels of Fascist injustice, which will nonetheless inspire further justice long after those wheels have ground to a halt; and, finally, DiFrancesco's personal revelation that his ongoing search for truth and justice need not be as lonely as it has been, that he has blinded himself to a human benevolence that is never quite quenchable even in the worst of times.

Calling this movie "slow" misses the point. I agree with John Simon that the tempo of any scene in a truly good movie is at one with its meaning. A good part of *Open Doors* is adagio, but that is the tempo of DiFrancesco's wintry spirit. It is also the pace at which he slowly turns each new piece of evidence this way and that, letting no facet go unexamined. It is not too much to ask of an audience that it adjust itself to the measure of an extraordinary consciousness laid bare by extraordinary artists.

But the slowness is far from unalleviated; on the contrary, it is constantly alternated and counterpointed. One example among many: after a particularly unruly session in court, a police van drives Scalia back to prison. A long shot of the van shows it heading toward the camera. But the camera doesn't zoom forward to meet it, nor does the van seem to make any progress. Then, just as the shot is beginning to seem interminable, two quick close-ups of the vehicle visually and aurally slam us. It's like seeing a frozen sea instantly turn into an onrushing flood. But this is precisely the progress of Scalia's case! The legal stasis caused by fear and suppressed evidence is being broken by new evidence, and new truths rush away half-baked opinions and preconceptions.

In another scene, DiFrancesco is strolling on the waterfront with his motherless little daughter, whom he adores. He settles into a deck chair for a snooze while the child amuses herself. A long, circular shot of the pier lulls us just as surely as the serenity of the settling lulls the judge. But, a moment later, DiFrancesco wakes with a start and finds the girl gone. He rises in panic, shouting her name and the camera scurries with him as he darts about. A moment later his fear proves unfounded, but the scene, both in its visual design (circular calm torn by sudden short flights of panic) and in its tempo (the adagio of relaxation yielding to the allegro of search), communicates the main point of the entire film. Nothing can really be still, none can rest while the investigation is underway, while terrible truths are being pulled into the light in a land ruled by masters of prevarication. None, not the government officials who must obstruct justice, not the murderer who must seethe within his nightmares, and certainly not the good man who is made vulnerable through the only creature he unreservedly loves. "We execute monsters like Scalia so that the average citizen can sleep with his front door open," pontificates a justice department toady. DiFrancesco dryly ripostes, "I keep my front door shut." The spurious peace created by a murderous government is a tranquillity no wise man lets himself enjoy.

Gian Maria Volonte's performance as DiFrancesco is a masterpiece that incarnates the virtues of the entire film: intelligence leashed but fierce, an expressiveness that can never be mistaken

as minimalism. Volante's genius is to create an individual so self-contained and private that the camera seems to spy on him.

The schema of this movie resembles that of a Costa-Gavras film like *Z* or *State of Siege*: an investigation of an apparently isolated crime uncovers a network of government corruption. But *Open Doors* is not a Costa-Gavras job in which leftist opinion equals virtue and right-wing extremity defines evil. No, this movie is a plumb line lowered by its creators into the depths of human nature. The moviemakers never expect to touch bottom, but they show us marvels and monstrosities as we follow their cord many fathoms deep.

RICHARD ALLEVA

STAGE

DEMONIC GAMES

'SHOCK' & 'OLD BOY'

There has never been any doubt about the social and political implications of the plays of Sam Shepard and A. R. Gurney, but neither playwright had been particularly overt in spelling out those implications. Their most recent plays—Shepard's *States of Shock* and Gurney's *The Old Boy*—mark a change.

States of Shock, which played a limited run at the American Place Theatre, is set at some unspecified time in which the United States is being destroyed by an unidentified war, represented by bombing attacks (courtesy of the sound and lighting designers), vigorous percussion work, and news of offstage and onstage shortages. Set in what the characters keep calling a "family restaurant"—one table and one booth in Bill Stabile's brightly austere surroundings—the play consists of five characters who connect only minimally. A middle-aged couple, dressed in meticulous white, sit at the table and wait for their clam chowder to be served, watching the more flamboyant behavior in the booth with a mixture of disapproval and open fascination. The Colonel (John Malkovich in the most incredible hodgepodge of military dress I have seen since the Marx Brothers defended Freedonia in *Duck Soup*) commands the booth and finally the whole restaurant; he has brought Stubbs, in his wheel chair, on an outing from the hospital for a gooey ice cream treat. The waitress, named Glory Bee for heaven's sake, is a very pretty young black woman, inept at best, otherwise downright mutinous in the way she ignores the exasperated couple to concentrate on the Colonel and Stubbs. The latter, wounded in a war that sounds like a combination of Vietnam and Desert Storm, has a very visible wound, courtesy of makeup, where a shell passed through his body and killed the Colonel's son who was standing behind him. On command or on impulse, he bares his chest for the audience.

Much of the play is taken up with the Colonel's attempt to restage the scene with toy soldiers and tableware so that, as he keeps insisting, he can understand how his son's death happened. It never happened at all, or so we assume as it becomes clear that Stubbs is the son, rejected as an imperfect chip off the old

block, impotent as well as wheel-chair bound. Shepard's plays are full of elusive fathers and discomfited sons, but in *States of Shock* the generational theme is elevated into a political statement. At the end of the play, when Stubbs gets up, in more ways than one, conquering both deficiencies, and the Colonel retreats to the wheel chair, the play reverts to the good Greek theme of the son's replacing the father. Yet, along the way, particularly in the demented patriotic rhetoric of the Colonel, the play shows not only that fathers and sons fail one another, but that fathers, in this good American context, provide wars in which to sacrifice sons. The play ends with the entire cast reprising "Goodnight, Irene," which the couple had sung earlier, with the emphasis on the stanza about lying down to die.

The play, which is constructed of fragments and disparate images, was effective in the theater, building out of often broadly comic material a cumulative effect of loss. Yet, looking back at it after a few weeks, I find that the force has dissipated and that the ideas seem either faulty or obvious. What remains are some strong images, a remembered assault of sound and visual effect, and, most of all, an incredible performance by Malkovich. The Colonel is another of those characters (like the protagonist of Lanford Wilson's *Burn This*) in which Malkovich could pull out all stops. He soared in Shepardian lyricism, cobbled out of patriotic clichés; swooped from ingratiating softness to fulminating anger; cajoled; teased; played body-and-mind games. His performance was a delight to watch even as I wondered—as in *Burn This*—if there were a character being consumed rather than created by Malkovich's fire. In *States of Shock*, I suspect that Malkovich and Shepard were playing the same demonic game with a shared disruption of all rules.

The *Old Boy* takes place in familiar Gurney country, this time a classy New England prep school to which Sam—the perfect image of a candidate for governor—returns to make the graduation speech and, almost as an afterthought, to announce a tennis complex to be funded by the mother of his dead friend Perry, whose name it will bear. Therein lies the problem. Sam is shepherded by Bud, a bright Irish Catholic lawyer, who admires Sam and his WASP connections (the old-boy network), but does not want Sam to look too preppy for the general public. That, as it turns out, is the least of Bud's worries. Through flashbacks and noisy confrontation scenes, we learn that Perry was a confused homosexual, forced to go straight by Sam, his "old boy" (student mentor), who elects to "save" Perry by setting him up with Alison, the shopkeeper's daughter who was Sam's own first love (i.e., sexual partner). We (and Sam) come to recognize that he is a product and a victim of the narrow society which created him, that although he can be admirable (as a public servant), as a human being he lacks the capacity to feel deeply. Therefore he was able to free himself of the the burdens of Alison and Perry by manipulating them into a marriage that was a foreordained disaster.

Through the multiple meanings of "old boy," the play suggests that Sam's deficiencies are those of his class, that he represents high-minded, intelligent men (a gender specific noun) who do

not have the compassion or the understanding to see that America is a heterogeneous society. I am sure that the same limited vision can be found in ward headquarters in an Italian or a black district here in my own Philadelphia, but that is not Gurney's subject. His indictment of class has special resonance since Sam's old-boy network once controlled—and still does to some extent—the levers of power in this country.

Sam's self-discovery (after an angry denunciation by Alison) brings him to a speech that is a *mea culpa* for having failed Perry and to a collapse into tears which presumably wreck him as a viable candidate even as it opens him up as a human being. This kind of scene is a natural in the theater and the audience inevitably roots for Sam's rebirth, but Gurney, as though he distrusts the sentimentality of the occasion, mixes Sam's speech with Bud's phone call to his wife in which the event is analyzed as it takes place. This is a sample of Gurney's playing with the realistic surface of his work, less flamboyant than the theatrical tricks in *The Dining Room* and *Sweet Sue*, but *The Old Boy* still comes across as too tidy, too predictable, too obviously moving toward those cleansing tears. The characters tend to be stereotypes, but that is really only a problem with Perry's mother who, as Nan Martin plays her, comes through as the wicked witch of the West.

The Old Boy closed after a brief run at Playwrights Horizon when several of the performers were highjacked by a lush TV special on which Stephen Collins (Sam) will play John Kennedy. The play is supposed to reopen elsewhere off-Broadway in the fall.

GERALD WEALES

ART

GRACE ABOUNDS

SEBASTIAO SALGADO'S PHOTOGRAPHS

“**A**n Uncertain Grace” is a suggestive title, but it hardly captures the riveting photographic collection that makes up Brazilian photojournalist Sebastiao Salgado's first retrospective in this country. The exhibit, which opened in San Francisco and moved on to The International Photography Center in New York, is now on view in Norfolk; it closes later this year in San Diego. It should not be missed.

The grace in Salgado's photographs is anything but uncertain. The nearly ninety black and white photographs rival the work of Henri Cartier-Bresson or Walker Evans. Like Cartier-Bresson and Evans, Salgado's subjects are people tested by events and made memorable by the artist's attention and discretion.

Salgado's settings vary, from ritual to war, from survival to children's games. There is a particular emphasis on the rigors of work in the third world—Brazil, India, Ecuador, Bangladesh—and on life and death in the face of famine and civil war. Salgado manages to be on the latest firing line. The *New York Times*

Magazine (June 9) carried his photographs of oil-well firefighters in Kuwait. These were followed by an essay on the photographer by Matthew L. Wald.

Despite the weightiness of his subjects, Salgado's photographs are neither overwrought nor sentimental. “I do not make pictures to give anybody a bad conscience,” he told Wald. “We can mind the problem of others and not be on the defensive about the problem.”

The problems. Scarcely ever has a photographer rendered them so lucidly, so unforgettably, and under such circumstances as this forty-seven-year-old former economist who was forced to flee Brazil in 1968 for political reasons. The exhibit opens with a 1986 series of photographs from Brazil's Serra Pelada gold mine. When Pope John Paul II writes in *Centesimus annus* that “the human inadequacies of capitalism and the resulting domination of things over people are far from disappearing,” he might have been providing a gloss on Salgado's photographs. At first look, the shots of Serra Pelada seem like stills from a motion picture set. Such scenes—masses of humanity laboring like insects in an open pit mine—could be from *Land of the Pharaohs*, but surely not A.D. 1986. But immediately, one confronts individuals in situations that reveal an essential element of their humanity: unself-conscious contemporaries, impervious to the lens of the camera but keenly attuned to Salgado's own humanity, seemingly enslaved by circumstance but generally unbowed.

The Serra Pelada photographs are like Stations of the Cross. Sometimes all the photographer gives is a series of legs and feet struggling to dig into a muddy slope. In one photograph, an army of bodies ascends crude wooden ladders, ten across, twenty men deep, shoulder to foot, shoulder to foot, up from one landing in the Pueblo-like pit to the next. Another photograph depicts an angular, mud-covered Sisyphus from above as he makes the top of the ladder, a bundle of slag strapped in a bag to his shoulders. He is concentrating on securing the final rung and then moving onto the ledge. There is a keen, dramatic suspense in the moment: the man senses he might yet topple back eight stories into the pit below. The white of his eye, at the center of the photograph, indicates the total effort of his concentration not to loose his grip. The tag next to the photograph indicates the broader context: “In the Serra Pelada gold mine, each worker makes up to sixty trips daily, transporting bags of dirt from the bottom of the mine to the sediment dump on top.” Does this man still carry his burden? It seems inconceivable. But Salgado has immortalized him, much as Pablo Neruda did Cristobal Miranda and the sodium nitrate shovelers at Tocopilla.

From India (1990), a group portrait of three coal miners, black-covered magi whose eyes search the inscrutable camera's eye for the star of deliverance. In another, six women in flowing saris and splendid headdresses clear a canal under construction by carrying the dirt out in wok-like pans balanced on their heads. Two clouds move unhindered in the background as the women ascend and descend a slope; one woman, going down, extends an arm to another coming up. Both clouds and women seem to be dancing, albeit to different choreographies.

A worker welds the hull of a boat in Brest, France (1990). We see his protective goggles through the eye of a huge steel

clip being attached to the hull. It is like a Miró: a playful eye looking into the camera through a hole, the welding torch sending out a cascade of joyous fireworks.

Mali, 1985: the Prodigal Son's mother. She is draped in black, and but one eye shows. Worn out by sand storms and chronic infections, the eye has become nothing more than a withered, onion-like film. The look on the woman's face is not one of terror but of irreparable grief and separation. A pietà without even the comfort of the corpse. "The lamp of the body is the eye....If your eyes are bad, your whole body will be in darkness."

In 1984-85, Salgado worked with *Médecins sans Frontières* covering the great famine in the Sahel. His photographs from Ethiopia startled the world. Here, an Eritrean refugee, Giacometti-like, stands holding the limp skeletal form of his son. The man looks like a tribal chieftain cradling the last of his people. His gaze is that of an eternal judge, merciful but undistracted. And we...we will never be satisfied without his verdict.

Salgado depends on natural light, and his skill in using it is superb. In a photo of leprosy victims at a clinic in Chad (1985), exterior light from the right makes each face in the dark confines of the primitive waiting area distinct and discernible. At a Kenyan girls' school (1986), fog swirls around a circle of chanting, swaying students; the grainy quality of the photograph makes the whole scene damp and windswept. In a tree full of children in Thailand (1987), eight young boys swing from boughs in a Shaker-like tree of life. They look simultaneously like tree ornaments and candles on an inverted Menorah. The sun breaks through with full force from behind the tree, obliterating whole

sections where the foliage does not cover. These appear as liberated zones where the sparks of primeval creation have been made manifest. And yet, each child's face is not overexposed but in proper contrast and focus.

Hope, humor, death, valor—they all have their distinct, honored place in this exhibit. Cultures are given their due. A Brazilian peasant (1983), stripped to the waist, holds his naked baby daughter next to a life-size portrait of Christ. The three are joined. Despite his poverty, the peasant sees and is seen by God. A Guatemalan woman (1978) watches a small girl, perhaps her daughter, from a small window within a door. The girl sells small candied apples unaware of the woman's benevolent gaze. The beautiful fruit foreshadows a second, better Eden.

In 1963, Pope John XXIII's *Pacem in terris* caused such a worldwide response that an edition of the text was published with Magnum photographs from around the world illustrating the text. Salgado's photographs could easily do the same for *Centesimus annus*.

Viewing "An Uncertain Grace" is both exhausting and exhilarating. I had never had the experience of standing before photographs and finding my flesh tensed almost to the point of twitching. It happened here. Salgado's photographs, heightened by his composition and technique, are profoundly social. "Man is made to live socially," he told Wald, "and photography is an instrument of this." His images are remarkably contemporary. Will they last? There is not the slightest doubt. They reveal something of God's own attention and abounding presence.

PATRICK JORDAN

BOOKS

Two peoples, two stories

THE CONVENT AT AUSCHWITZ

Wladyslaw T. Bartoszewski

George Braziller, Inc., \$17.95, 169 pp.

Mark O'Connor

In 1984 eight Carmelite nuns received permission to open a cloister in an abandoned building on the border of Auschwitz. An appeal for money sponsored by a Belgian Catholic organization in the fall of 1985 brought the convent to the attention of European Jews. This in turn led to a long-distance, intermittent debate involving principally three interested parties: Jewish

international organizations, the Catholic international church hierarchy, and the Polish episcopate. Eventually, in February 1987, an agreement was reached in Geneva. It stipulated that a center for "information, education, meetings, and prayers" would be constructed in the vicinity of Auschwitz, outside the heart of the camp, and that the nuns would move their convent into this new building.

Two years later the agreed-upon deadline passed without so much as ground having been broken. The diocese of Cracow, under whose auspices the center was to be constructed, requested an extension of the deadline, blaming the lack of progress on the difficulties of building anything

under what was left of Polish communism. Cardinal Franciszek Macharski, head of the diocese, also admitted that the process of educating Polish Catholics to the need would be slow and painful. For their part, the Jewish dignitaries who had negotiated the settlement, seeing no tangible progress, began to doubt that the church had ever intended to move the convent.

It was at this point that confrontation replaced dialogue. In July of '89 a group of Orthodox Jews from New York scaled the fence surrounding the convent, and proceeded to pray and blow horns in the inner courtyard as a protest against the continued presence of the Carmelites. They were forcibly removed by some laborers work-

ing at the site. In the rancorous atmosphere which followed, Catholics and Jews began trading ultimatums. Cardinal Macharski, a signatory to the Geneva document, announced that under existing conditions it would be impossible to honor that accord. Rabbi Avi Weiss, leader of the demonstrators, argued that Auschwitz should be placed under the control of the Israeli government. The dispute escalated yet further after the controversial homily of Cardinal Jozef Glemp, Primate of Poland, delivered at Czestochowa, the spiritual center of Polish Catholicism. Glemp then brought the confrontation to a head by repudiating the Geneva agreement.

The impasse was overcome only after John Paul II became directly involved. His intervention in support of the proposed center for meetings and prayers led finally to the breaking of ground in February 1990. A few months later, in a gesture of support, the leader of Poland's new, non-Communist government, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, announced that the assumptions under which the exhibits of the "State Museum at Auschwitz" functioned, and which had been formulated above all to suit the needs of Poland's Communist rulers, would be reevaluated. He promised that this evaluation would be both international, and interdenominational. As for the Carmelites, they will, by the end of this year, have been moved away from the camp.

And so much for the controversy. At least, until one begins to understand, as Wladyslaw Bartoszewski does, that "the issue was not about the presence of a few nuns praying in an old dilapidated building. It was about Jews and Poles being able to preserve conflicting and essential views of history grounded in the same place." For Jews, Auschwitz has become the symbol of the Holocaust. This death camp designed for their mass extermination is the huge common grave of European Jewry. For Poles, Auschwitz is one crucial symbol of the destruction of the Polish intelligentsia; Katyn is the other. When Hitler and Stalin partitioned Poland in September 1939 they partitioned the "pacification" process as well: Poles captured by the Soviets were interned in camps in the Katyn forest near Smolensk, then later murdered in 1940; Poles arrested in German-held territories were sent to Auschwitz, where 270,000

The main reason for the outbreak of the controversy about the Carmelite convent at Auschwitz was an almost total lack of understanding of Jewish matters on the part of Poles. Polish knowledge of Judaism was with few exceptions nonexistent. The convent was located on the site of the concentration/extermination camp Auschwitz-Birkenau because the well-meaning nuns wanted to pray for its victims. No one in Poland understood that this gesture would be offensive to both religious and secular Jews. The conflict was exacerbated by the lack of historical knowledge on the part of both communities. There was also the problem of a deep rift in the mutual perception of both history and religion. The difficulties in resolving the conflict were attributable largely to the symbolic nature of Auschwitz. It was a fight between two symbols—of Jewish and Polish martyrdom.

Both communities used their respective interpretation of the significance of Auschwitz to strengthen their national identities. Each interpretation threatened the identity of the other. There were people in both communities who understood this problem, but the majority ignored it for too long. The conflict became difficult to solve because reason was no match for the power of symbols.

—WLADYSLAW T. BARTOSZEWSKI
The Convent at Auschwitz

Polish Catholics died. Thus today, when Polish Catholics and Jews from all over the world look at Auschwitz, they see two different places. And these very distinct perspectives came into direct conflict when that small group of Carmelites decided to open a convent there.

Bartoszewski uncovers the layers of buried issues which over time rendered Jewish and Catholic perspectives concerning the meaning of Auschwitz mutually exclusive, fueling a smoldering resentment between Jew and Pole, the Nazis' principal victims, as they each attempted to preserve what Leszek Kolakowski has termed a

"monopoly of martyrology." While the core of the disagreement is rooted in history and its proper interpretation, the proximate causes of the convent controversy are theological in nature. They are interwoven with the post-Vatican II effort of the church to understand more perfectly the relation of Catholics to "our elder brothers in faith." And, of course, these theological concerns are inseparably intertwined with the Polish pope who expressed this homage during his unprecedented visit to a synagogue in 1986, but who, in the minds of many Jews, is undermining the true significance of the Holocaust by "Christianizing" it. This is where the controversies over the beatification of the Carmelite Edith Stein and the Carmel at Auschwitz meet. It is also a beginning point for understanding why Poles, isolated from the Western community and its Jewish component since World War II, "Christianized" Auschwitz not simply to redeem their own tragic experience, but to bring to the Jew and to all who perished at Auschwitz a Christian interpretation of suffering, with its accompanying need for unconditional forgiveness, alien to the Jewish tradition. Above all *The Convent at Auschwitz* documents that, among the many regrettable consequences of the church's long history of anti-Semitism, one especially tragic, lingering result is fostering a mutual hermeneutics of suspicion among Jews and among Catholics about their respective motivations in interfaith dialogue.

Bartoszewski moves expertly between the broad theological issues affecting all Catholics and Jews in their search for reconciliation, and the Polish particulars. His background makes him uniquely suited to the task. Bartoszewski's father, whose name he bears, has dedicated a lifetime to Jewish-Polish reconciliation. The elder Bartoszewski was a political prisoner at Auschwitz. Upon his release he helped found *Zegota*, the council of aid to Jews, and served as Home Army coordinator to Jewish wartime resistance. Bartoszewski himself is secretary to the Institute for Polish-Jewish studies at Oxford, and a vital force in its superb journal, *Polin*.

Bartoszewski's immersion in the Jewish-Polish dialogue, his unmatched access to expert opinion from both faiths, his native Polish fluency, are all indispensable ele-

ments to giving this complex story its proper context. No less important are Bartoszewski's formidable skills of analysis.

For anyone interested in understanding contemporary Jewish-Catholic relations, this is a singularly important book.

CONSTANT CACOPHONY

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE FRENCH NATION, 1589-1989

Norman Ravitch

Routledge, \$54.95, 214 pp.

Steven Englund

Versailles, June 13, 1789, a choice moment in the annals of irony. Five weeks of fractious infighting have brought the French Estates-General to a stalemate. Three Poidevin priest-deputies of the First Estate decide to accept the standing invitation of the Third Estate for the orders to unite. They "cross over." "We come, Messieurs, preceded by the torch of reason, moved by love of the commonweal, to take our places at the side of our fellow citizens, of our brothers."

With those words, Father Jacques Jallet greets a delighted "Commons," as the Third Estate's representatives have come to be called. In subsequent days, the priests' action precipitates a hemorrhage of defections among representatives of the clergy and the nobility (the First and Second Estates), thus contributing signally to justifying the Third in its breathtaking pretension to reconstitute itself as the National Assembly of France. One would be hard-pressed to isolate a *more* critical moment in the launching of what presently came to be called the French Revolution.

And yet we now know that scores of "*curé-patriotes*" were from the outset having to suppress second thoughts and inner doubts as they gaped into the abyss separating their own true motivations from those of their secular revolutionary compatriots. On one side stood tridentine clerical reformers, eager to purify the *Eglise de France* and return it to the full glory

of baroque Catholicism. To that end, they were prepared to speak a very untridentine language of "enlightened" reason and patriotism (cf. Jallet, above), and to walk hand in hand with the stridently sovereign "National" Assembly. On the other side stood deeply secular revolutionaries who intended not only to finish the absolutist monarchy's policy of perfecting state-control of the French church but also to reduce dramatically Catholicism's role in the life of society.

Looking back, it is hard to see how priests like Jallet could have long deceived themselves about Mirabeau, et al., but what is even more curious is that their tendency to self-delusion has been transmitted to posterity. French historians of the revolution generally recoil at postulating any prophetic and ineluctable clash *ab initio* between Catholicism and revolution. From Aulard to Lefebvre to Plongeron they have strained to see the growing schism as contingent, unnecessary, deplorable.

If the French view is finally changing (and it is), this is largely thanks to the work of English and American scholars such as Maurice Hutt, Timothy Tackett, and now Norman Ravitch. *The Catholic Church and the French Nation* is a wonderful instance of balanced and complete, yet at the same time highly interpretive, history. One gradually discerns a passionate and personal meditation underlying and guiding this work, which is dedicated "in loving memory" of the author's young son.

Ravitch is a Catholic of Mennaisian and Silloniste (that is to say, *Commonweal*) sympathies, but with no illusions about the possibility of a longterm alliance between the French Revolution and the church. Rather, he speaks of "misunderstanding" at the beginning of the Estates-General (1789) that perpetuated itself through the Year II—i.e., till 1794, when even the rump

"national" church (the constitutional church) was destroyed by the very (revolutionary) forces that brought it into existence.

Another major theme that emerges clearly from Ravitch's fine study is the French episcopacy's systematic choice of other stars to steer by than Lamennais or Sangnier. I put that euphemistically, which is not this author's style. "Can Christians believe their Saviour that the power of evil will not triumph over the church," he asks, "or should they seek to buttress the church by allying it with conservative forces and institutions?" The French episcopacy, as Ravitch remorselessly documents, invariably elected the conservative strategy, with the result that time and again, culminating with Vichy, it had to abandon embarrassing positions and alignments that only sullied the church and traduced the faith.

On the other hand, Ravitch might have posed more directly than he does the question: Would it have made any difference if the church had followed a Lamennais or a Sangnier? On almost any telling, but surely on this author's, the evidence leaves one doubtful. The antinomy between church and revolution goes to the very core in France. It would be hard to see how even a liberal or radical *curé-patriote* like Jallet could have effected a harmony between the Third (or Fourth) Republic and the church.

Ravitch's is thus a depressingly cyclical chronicle—until, that is, the 1960s and '70s, when the French church, profoundly affected by the catastrophe of Vichy and by the changes wrought by Vatican Council II, shed its traditional reflexes at roughly the same time that the republic shed its anti-

REVIEWERS

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clericalism. One can infer from Ravitch's analysis that leopards and spots may finally be separated.

Yet are they? My one regret is that the author closes his work with the supposed liberal transformation of French Catholicism (or at least of the clergy)—as if the story ended with the early Fifth Republic. Yet as Ravitch is surely aware, recent years have witnessed the emergence of a powerful reaction against conciliar liberalism. Led by the irrepressible and brilliant archbishop of Paris, Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger, a growing number of French bishops and clergy

are lashing out against and suppressing many of the forms of Catholic action (clerical and lay) associated with Vatican II—modalities which they consider to be submissive, weak, complaisant.

Lustiger delights in speaking delphically and is therefore hard to slot. A converted Jew with a Sorbonne (secular) education, he makes no effort to disguise the fact that he is standing in for the pope, whom he happily compares to Gregory VII. So one does not know where it will all lead, but one certainly hopes that Professor Ravitch will keep watching. □

FAITH SEEKING DEPTH

FAITH'S FREEDOM

Luke T. Johnson

Fortress Press, \$8.95, 188 pp.

Robert P. Imbelli

A few years ago I chanced upon Luke Johnson's wonderfully helpful book, *The Writings of the New Testament*. He shows himself in that work to be not only a fine student of the New Testament; but, more remarkable still, one who reads the Scriptures with a keen sense of their faith perspective and concern which continues to nurture the life of discipleship. As if that were not merit enough, here, in addition, is a scholar and believer who writes with verve and conviction. Hence, when I received *Faith's Freedom*, I approached it with considerable expectations. Happily, it does not disappoint! This is an immensely satisfying book.

It satisfies, first, because it is so solidly based upon the church's written "constitution": the Scriptures of the New Testament. Moreover, its intentional objective is to read those Scriptures "whole": allowing the many voices of the New Testament canon to be heard. It satisfies, further, because it recognizes that for Scripture to live it must be heard and received anew

in the living experience of the church. Thus a two-fold exegesis is required: an exegesis of the scriptural text, but also an exegesis of the contemporary experience of faith. Hence the quest for a spirituality both classic and contemporary, ever ancient and ever new. It satisfies, finally, because an "argument" is mounted which is both personal and rigorous: one that seeks to outline a genuinely "lay" spirituality to be lived not in the monastery, but in modernity with its peculiar promise and peril.

The "lay" character of Johnson's vision of spirituality is manifest in the themes of part 2 of the book: "Connecting." As one would expect, he explores the issue of prayer and its possibility and modes for those not engaged in the professedly "contemplative life." But he ranges well beyond this expected theme to take up nettlesome, yet crucial, issues of power and possessions, of anger and sexuality, of evil and suffering. Thus there is a comprehensiveness to Johnson's vision of life in the Spirit—all too rare in discussions of spirituality which frequently roam between the rarefied and the sentimentalized.

Another characteristic feature of Johnson's approach is his conviction that spirituality is faith "seeking depth and maturity." Key to his understanding is the New Testament concept of *teleios*: faith come to *mature* measure in a person. Having, in the post-Vatican II era, aban-



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doned the invidious elitism of “higher ways” in the Christian life, we seem, in reaction, to have succumbed to a pseudo-democratic leveling-down, confusing the “universal call to holiness” with its actual attainment. Johnson’s insistence, so faithful to both the letter and spirit of the New Testament, is that holiness is the fruit of unremitting generosity and discernment, not the indiscriminating canonization of one’s personal preference and current state, whether mellow or dyspeptic.

Paradoxically, to support this “lay spirituality,” Johnson sets forth a theological vision which I deem distinctly “monastic.” By this I do *not* intend “cloistered” or “detached.” Rather, it is a theological sensibility nourished by a close and meditative pondering of the Scriptures: a *lectio divina* that joins careful exegesis with concern for the Word spoken now to the community of faith. It is thus a preeminently pastoral theology, whose optic is the present encounter with the Word in the community formed by the Spirit. Johnson indeed speaks of “the proper task of theology” as “the discernment of God’s work in the world.” If this definition seems to move theology perilously close to spirituality, I would count that gain and further tribute to the fecundity of the Benedictine spirit.

Another feature of Johnson’s approach is its clear Christocentrism. “From beginning to end, the form of Christian spirituality is the imitation of Christ.” This cannot be construed, of course, in a literalist manner; but it can and must be construed as the Spirit-inspired replication of the pattern of Jesus, the Messiah, in the changed circumstances of our own lives and times. The elucidation of that pattern forms the heart of this thoughtful and profound book. Suffice it to assert that, inspired by the Letter to the Hebrews’ designation of Jesus as “the pioneer and perfecter of faith,” Johnson takes with utmost seriousness that Jesus is God’s Word *incarnate*, sharing fully in the finitude of the human condition; that he was “brought to perfection by what he suffered”; and thus, transforming our situation from within, became “the source of the new life of the Spirit for all who believe in him.”

The classic Christocentrism of Johnson’s approach provides him with appropriate criteria of Christian identity at a time

marked by a perilous “erosion of tradition,” when an indiscriminate and promiscuous use of Christian symbols risks rendering Christianity “linguistically dysfunctional.” It allows him, perceptively and courageously, to identify two alternative “models” of spirituality, which, though they may employ Christian terms, actually represent debased coinage. He calls these the “gnostic” and the “liberationist” models. And, though he speaks of them as “ideal types” and refuses to associate specific authors with them, anyone engaged in pastoral ministry will quickly recognize their popular epigones and be grateful for the diagnostic clarity his analysis offers. Such spiritual diagnosis and discernment is an essential moment of mature faith. Considering it brought to mind Saint Benedict’s not always complimentary discrimination of the “types of monks” early in his *Rule*!

Though I have stressed Johnson’s biblical commitment and competence, I would not want to leave the impression that he is an unregenerate “biblicist.” He evidently has read widely and well in philosophy and theology; and accords pride of place to Karl Rahner as a theological mentor. One senses as much in his nuanced treatment of philosophical and theological anthropology under the heading, “the human project.” But this dependence perhaps also accounts for the one area where I found myself registering some reservation.

In his discussion of “revelation” in chapter 3, Johnson writes: “The term revelation, therefore, describes less a divine activity than a process of human interpretation.” And, later in the same chapter, he summarizes his understanding of revelation, “not as a product delivered by God but as a human process of interpreting experience.” That last disjunction seems particularly unfelicitous. To avoid construing revelation as “a product delivered by God,” is our only recourse to reduce it to “a human process of interpreting experience”? Surely *tertium datur*. Indeed, Johnson himself, elsewhere in the book supplies resources enough for a more adequate treatment. These untapped resources may, in fact, derive from another theological influence to which he attributes “significant leavening”: Hans Urs von Balthasar. In that case all might yet be rectified, in the treatment of revelation, by a double measure

of Balthasarian leaven!

In describing what he means by “a classic spirituality,” Johnson disclaims any presumption to be composing “a spiritual classic.” The modesty is spiritually becoming. But, if laying solid and spacious foundations, raising imaginative and insightful upper stories, and embellishing the whole with a clear elegance of expression, is the stuff of which classics are made, *Faith’s Freedom* is certainly in contention. It may not be the *Interior Castle*...but then Johnson is writing for “contemporary Christians.”

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 418)

Commonweal readers; we leave it to them to judge whether our editorial treated *Centesimus annus* in a ho-hum, tepid, or condescending manner; whether we found it disorienting; whether we are animated by a “superannuated anticapitalism”; and how defensive—or not—was our response. We do not recognize our editorial in the steady patter of adjectives and innuendos Mr. Neuhaus applies to it.

And, of course, we recommend a careful reading of the encyclical itself as the surest way to grasp John Paul II’s thinking on the intertwined themes of human freedom, the market system, and the cultural, political, and moral systems that so largely determine the impact of the economy, whether on individual persons or on whole societies. We think readers will find the pope’s thinking considerably more nuanced and his conclusions far more conditioned than they are represented to be in Mr. Neuhaus’s letter to us or in the op-ed piece he wrote for the *Wall Street Journal*.

More than his opinions about *Centesimus annus*, what interested us about Mr. Neuhaus’s *Journal* article was its attempt to insert a wedge between the encyclical and the U.S. bishops’ pastoral on the economy. In a reflex move to the verb form that might be called the insinuating conditional, Mr. Neuhaus wrote: “It may be, for instance, that the controlling assumptions of the American bishops’ 1986 pastoral letter, ‘Economic Justice for All,’ must now be recognized as unrepresentative of Balthasarian leaven!”

sentative of the church's authoritative teaching." In the rhetorical slippage between "it may be" and "must now be recognized," there is a large and bold accusation about the pastoral letter, along with a very large loophole for the author. He needs it. The principal authors of the pastoral have welcomed the encyclical, just as high-ranking Vatican officials welcomed the pastoral. Apart from Mr. Neuhaus and certain of his allies, no one has seen contradictions between the two documents or their "controlling assumptions."

Mr. Neuhaus has few peers in the use of rhetorical innuendo for planting ideas and for positioning himself in debate. Thus, we take his letter as intended less to refute our editorial than to display his considerable enthusiasm for "the pope's argument" and, by extension, the pope himself. Self-elevated to this lofty height, Mr. Neuhaus can see what we do not: that "democratic capitalism is the economic corollary of the Christian understanding of human nature and destiny...." The encyclical doesn't say this, but perhaps it is only our "condescending" attitude that prevents us from grasping that it's what the encyclical *means*. On the other hand, perhaps Mr. Neuhaus is saying that the pope *would* have said it if only he more fully shared Mr. Neuhaus's enthusiasms.

Perhaps nothing illustrates the Neuhaus mentality more starkly than his last sentences urging us to cultivate "second thoughts" about the encyclical, and adding: "Surely, the pope deserves at least that much, if only for old times' sake, from a magazine that used to bill itself as Catholic."

Commonweal has always defined itself as a review of public affairs, religion, literature, and the arts published by Roman Catholic laypeople. It still does. Seldom in the journal's history, and not for a great many years, has anyone challenged the accuracy of that self-description; to our knowledge, Mr. Neuhaus is the first to suggest that we have abandoned it. His doing so is puzzling, but perhaps explainable.

Mr. Neuhaus has recently been received into the Catholic church and on several occasions has reported that he will soon

be ordained a Roman Catholic priest. Evidently he now feels himself qualified to define who can call themselves Catholic and what today, unlike in the "old times," no longer measures up. Perhaps it is only the novice's eagerness to identify with the Holy See and its authoritative teaching that leads him to attribute his own views to the pope, to find the U.S. bishops out of step with the pope, and to place *Commonweal* beyond the pale.

The Catholic church is a very large church and certainly there is plenty of room for Mr. Neuhaus. We hope he will concede as much to us.

'Crossing the line'

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: There is a line between reasonable criticism of an Israeli government policy or action and blaming Israel alone for the failure to achieve peace in the Middle East. The line is ignored by her enemies, for whom nothing Israel has ever done or can ever do is justifiable, and is generally observed by her friends and supporters who are mindful of geography and history—i.e., Israel's tiny size and vulnerable borders, the implacable hostility of the rejectionist Arab states, twenty-one of

Thought

A Review of Culture and Idea

JUNE 1991

THE CHRISTIAN IMAGINATION

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which maintain an official state of war with Israel, and the relentless campaign of Arab terrorism. (There have been eleven infiltration incidents from Jordan this year—greater than the total number in 1990 or 1988-89.)

Occasionally, however, even usually fair-minded observers cross that line, and *Commonweal* itself crosses it ["Crossing the Line," June 14]. Your assumption that it is Israel's settlement policies on the West Bank that constitute the major impediment to peace—"a critical barrier to peace negotiations"—overlooks the fact that when there were no settlements, there were no peace negotiations. When there were a few scattered settlements, there were no peace negotiations. And settlements did not prevent an Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty. The Arab summit Khartoum formula of August 1967: "No peace with Israel, no negotiations with Israel, no recognition of Israel," has never been repudiated. That refusal to come to grips with Israel as a permanent and legitimate reality is the critical barrier to peace negotiations. From the perspective of the Palestine National Covenant, "their" land is not just the West Bank and Gaza; "their" land includes Haifa and Tel Aviv as well as Jerusalem. "Their" land is all of present-day Israel.

Commonweal correctly notes that numbers of Israelis object to the settlement activities. Israelis have also spoken out against instances of human rights violations, and Israeli lawyers have represented Palestinian clients in numerous cases. (One seeks in vain to find Arab human rights activists who are similarly outraged about the persecution and torture of Jews in Syria, and equally willing to defend them.)

Moreover, the venomous inter-Palestinian violence cannot be ignored. Like the wars before it, the *intifada* has failed to gain its political goals: the withdrawal of Israel from the occupied territories without negotiation, compromise, peace, or security for Israel. It has degenerated into a murderous blood-bath of Arab intergroup warfare, with Palestinians killing one another in increasing numbers without judge or jury. This sorry spectacle of slaughter has undoubtedly reinforced the conviction of most Israelis that, but for Israel's strength and vigilance, such would be their fate.

Secretary James Baker's recent truculent outburst at Israel, unbalanced by equally strong criticism of Arab dismissal of his peacekeeping efforts, or of Syria's dismal record of human rights abuses and virtual annexation of Lebanon, quite rightly "caused a storm in Congress," where many felt he was venting his irritation in bullying fashion on the wrong party. *Commonweal* may fault the congressional reaction, but many felt it was an appropriate response to inappropriate petulance. To refer to the congressional supporters of Israel as "mortgaged" is an invidious use of the word and unworthy of a magazine with *Commonweal's* record of fairness and decency.

Whatever one's position on the political wisdom of continuing Israeli settlements in the territories, the major impediment to peace remains the intransigence of the Arab states and the Palestinian hardliners.

JUDITH BANKI

The writer is associate national director of interreligious affairs with the American Jewish Committee.

The editors reply:

Classically, criticism of Israel's policies elicits from Israel's defenders responses in the comparative mode: whatever one thinks of what Israel has done, the Arabs and the Palestinians are worse—far worse, so much worse that the criticism, at hand, of Israel is unfair.

We regret that Ms. Banki follows this standard formula. She is able to do so only by refuting a statement *Commonweal* did not make. Our editorial did not say Israel's settlement policies constitute "the major impediment to peace," only that "the settlements now serve as a critical barrier to peace negotiations." That remains a true statement, and it is not less true because there are other barriers attributable to other parties. Whatever Syria, the other Arab states, the PLO, or the *intifada* activists may do, Israel is at liberty to stop turning over land and water in the West Bank and Gaza to Israeli settlers, in contravention of international law, in open disdain for protests from its faithful ally, the United States, and in violation of the rights of the people who own the land.

Ms. Banki describes Secretary Baker's recent comments as "truculent." His words

bear repeating: "Every time I have gone to Israel in connection with the peace process, I have been met with the announcement of new settlement activity. Nothing has made my job of trying to find Arab and Palestinian partners for Israel more difficult than being greeted by a new settlement every time I arrive." In our view, it's the settlements policy itself, not what Mr. Baker said about it, that is properly called truculent. We also believe that the process Mr. Baker is trying to advance is conceived as much in Israel's interest as to promote U.S. concerns in the Middle East.

Perhaps our use of the word "mortgaged" was elliptical, but it was not, we think, invidious. Members of Congress who in other circumstances would certainly protest policies analogous to Israel's tactics in the occupied territories fall strangely silent when the settlements are under discussion, or even defend them. Over the years, it has become amply clear that on Middle East issues many of them follow the lead of lobbyists who in turn take their briefs from whatever government is in power in Israel—just as many accept guidance from the National Rifle Association on the merits of gun control legislation. In both instances, the reasons have as much to do with the cost of election campaigns as with the issue at hand.

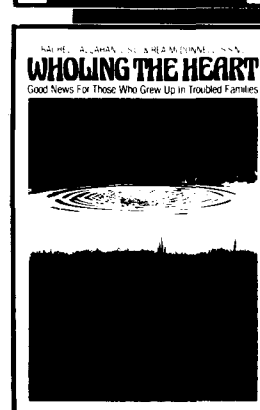
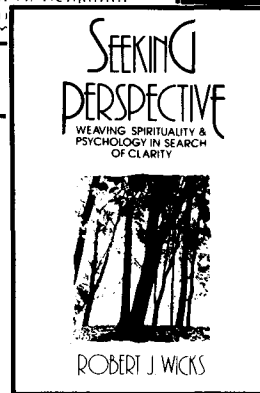
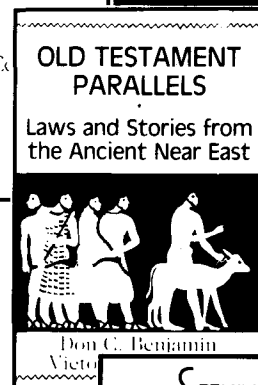
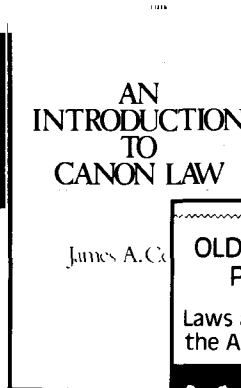
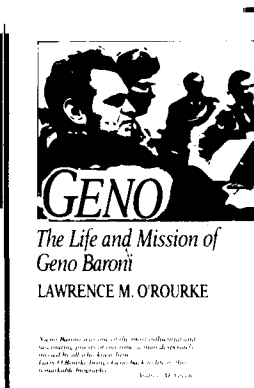
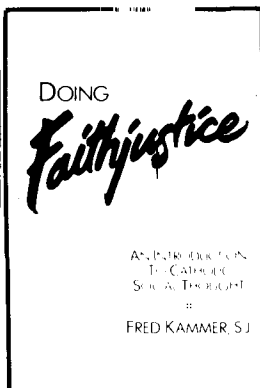
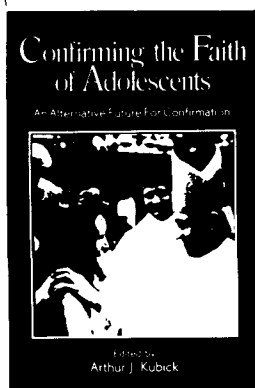
Israelis who would like to see the settlements ended as well as those Americans who agree with them should be heard in Congress—a new project for the American Jewish Committee that *Commonweal* would happily support.

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